

Unlike Us Amsterdam #2

**UNDERSTANDING
SOCIAL MEDIA MONOPOLIES
AND THEIR ALTERNATIVES**

TrouwAmsterdam,
Wibautstraat 127,
1091 GL Amsterdam

March 8-10, 2012

Inhoudelijk en financiële verantwoording Unlike Us Conference, maart 2012

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1. Unlike Us, Understanding Social Media Monopolies and their Alternatives

Naam project: Unlike Us, Understanding Social Media Monopolies and their Alternatives

Indiener: Instituut voor Netwerkcultuur

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Locatie: TrouwAmsterdam, Amsterdam

Mede gefinancierd door: Mondriaan Fund, Creat-IT Applied Research Centre, Stichting Democratie en Media, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences en het domein Media, Creatie en Informatie van de Hogeschool van Amsterdam

Design en ontwerp: Giulia Ciliberto en Silvio Lorusso

1.1 Belangrijkste opgeleverde resultaten

- Conferentie en podium waar verschillende sociale alternatieven hen showcases konden presenteren;
- Unlike Us programmaboek >> een omschrijving per sessie en daarbinnen een overzicht van alle deelnemende sprekers en een overzicht van alternatieve sociale media. Daarnaast is er van iedere deelnemer een korte biografie opgenomen. Dit event vond plaats van 8 tot en met 10 maart 2012
- <http://networkcultures.org/unlikeus> >> de website/weblog van het event. Het idee achter deze blog is het hebben van een vaste plek waar materiaal kan worden verzameld en geactualiseerd rondom dit thema. Daarnaast is in deze blog ook de vorige Unlike Us event opgenomen wat plaats heeft gevonden in Cyprus;
- Opnames van alle presentaties >> alle presentaties zijn terug te vinden op <http://vimeo.com/album/1774005>;
- 225 tot 250 bezoekers, verdeeld over 3 dagen;
- Blogposts in relatie tot presentaties, zie volgende pagina's;
- Nieuwe contacten onderling binnen de sprekers. Netwerkuitbreiding en kenniscirculatie;

- Zeer uitgebreide lijst van bronnen zie hiervoor ook <http://networkcultures.org/wpmu/unlikeus/resources/>. Deze lijst geeft een uitgebreid overzicht van al het Unlike Us onderzoeksmateriaal;
- Documentatie / INC online media archief, en foto's;
- Publiek bezoekers programma;
- Bijeenkomst met alle geïnteresseerden en betrokkenen over een toekomstige Unlike Us conferentie en de Unlike Us reader;
- Actieve mailinglist met 250 gebruikers: <http://networkcultures.org/wpmu/unlikeus/maillinglist/>.

1.2 <http://networkcultures.org/unlikeus>

De blog is gedurende het project heel erg goed bezocht, dit mede door de onderzoeksblogposts die regelmatig geplaatst werden en de beschikbare resources op de blog. Dit is de mainportal richting de doelgroep. Alle uitingen omtrent het event zijn hier gecommuniceerd en deze blog zal bestaan blijven. Hier zijn diverse materialen terug te vinden van video interviews tot foto's en heeft in die zin ook nut als digitaal archief.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the 'Unlike Us' website. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <http://networkcultures.org/wpmu/unlikeus/2-amsterdam/conference-reports/>. The website header includes the 'institute of network cultures' logo and navigation links such as 'unlike us | out of ink | theory on demand | video vortex | the unbound book | economies of the commons 2 | copv, wikipedia | project archive'. The main content area features the 'Unlike Us' logo and a navigation menu with links for 'blog', 'about', '#1 limassol', '#2 amsterdam', 'maillinglist', 'resources', and 'contact/credits'. Under the heading 'Conference Reports Thursday, March 8', there is a list of speakers: 'Unlike Art', 'Joris van Hoboken', and 'Coralie Vogelaar'. Below that, 'Day 1: Friday, March 9' is listed with two sessions: 'SESSION 1: Social what? Defining the Social' (speakers: Jodi Dean, Dylan Wittkower) and 'SESSION 2: Artistic Responses to Social Media' (speakers: Walter Langelaar, Thomas Cheneveau, Olia Lialina). On the right side, there is a 'flickr' gallery with four photos and a 'recent posts' section listing articles like '26 april: debat over de macht van Facebook - vriendschap naar de beurs' and 'Interview Peter Olthoorn: De Macht van Facebook'.

1.3 Programma

Pre-Day workshop

Thursday, March 8 2012

Location: Trouw Amsterdam, Wibautstraat 127, 1091 GL Amsterdam

Project Session (13.30 – 16.30)

Showcasing Alternatives in Social Media

The best way to criticize platform monopolies is to support alternative free and open source software that can be locally installed. There are currently a multitude of decentralized social networks in the making that aspire to facilitate users with greater power to define for themselves with whom share their data. Let us look into the wildly different initiatives from Briar, Crabgrass, Diaspora*, Freedombox, Lorea, Secushare, Social Swarm, TheGlobalSquare, Thimbl and Unhosted.

In which settings are these initiative developed and what choices are made for their design? What community does this platform enable? And how do we experience the transition from, or interoperability with, other platforms? Is it useful to make a distinction between corporate competitors and grassroots initiatives? How can these beta alternatives best be supported, both economically and socially? Aren't we overstating the importance of software and isn't the availability of capital much bigger in determining the adoption of a platform?

Art Session (16.30 – 17.30)

Unlike Art

Bits of code, snippets, plugins and projects investigating social media by Networked Media students of Piet Zwart Institute (Rotterdam)

On the occasion of lectures, workshops and prototyping sessions, Networked Media students often dealt with the field of social media. As a result, a series of works in progress, experiments and ideas that question social media from different points of view, such as, for instance: online identity, monetization of data, privacy, online-offline boundaries.

Works by Dušan Barok (SK), André Castro (PT), Mirjam Dissel (NL), Eleanor Greenhalgh (UK), Fabien Labeyrie (FR), Jonas Lund (SE/NL), Sebastian Schmiege (GE), Bartholomäus Traubeck (GE), Danny Van Der Kleij (NL), Jasper Van Loenen (NL), Marie Woche (GE), Dave Young (IE). Moderated and curated by Silvio Lorusso (IT).

Coralie Vogelaar (17.30 – 17.45)

EAT SHIT AND DIE!

The web is filled with hate comments and death threads. Mainly because people think they are anonymous or don't think about it at all. For the book 'Dearest Tinkebell' Vogelaar researched what kind of people send death threads to TINKEBELL. It turned out hate mail senders are not scary people at all but mostly nice looking teenagers with an active social life on the internet. It was relatively easy

to find all the possible details about their lives; contact information like home addresses but also drunken photo's, diary's with their personal problems and gossips from friends. A lot of it is recognizable from our own teenage years. The only difference is that nowadays there is a whole generation growing up where everything is recorded.

Bits Of Freedom (17.45 – 18.00)

Joris van Hoboken (Bits of Freedom, IViR):

Making social networks respect privacy and communication freedoms

Bits of Freedom, the Dutch digital civil rights movement, is actively engaged in the debate about the respect for privacy and communication freedoms on social networks in the Netherlands. Now that much of online communications take place in these contexts, respect for fundamental right should follow. Over the last year Bits of Freedom has focused on raising awareness about the lack of respect for privacy and communication freedoms by dominant social network providers and pointed to alternatives. Bits of Freedom has made the digital rights issues relating to social networks one of its priorities for 2012 and it plans to more actively campaign for better protection of privacy and communication freedoms on social networks.

Unlike Us Conference day 1:

Friday, March 9 2012

Location: TrouwAmsterdam, Wibautstraat 127, 1091 GL Amsterdam

Session 1 (10.00 – 12.00)

Social what? Defining the Social

The term 'social' in 'social media' is embedded in positive connotations regarding community spirit and participation and is moreover rhetorically used as a given. Within the popular discourse social media are often portrayed as important tools for generating and preserving social interaction within the community, which would supposedly lead to a more engaged and involved society. But to what extent are these media actually social as opposed to commercial when we consider how 'the social' is being recreated and exploited for commercial success. By working around the utopian discourse we will further explore this phenomena within this session in order to define the 'social' in social media.

Moderator: Geert Lovink (NL)

Speakers: Jodi Dean (USA), Dylan Wittkower (USA)

Session 2 (13.00 – 15.15)

Artistic Responses to Social Media

Artists play a valuable role in visualizing power relationships and revitalizing prefab subliminal daily routines of social media usage. Artistic practice provides an important analytical site in the context of the proposed research agenda of Unlike Us. Artists are often among the first to deconstruct the familiar, and to facilitate an alternative lens to explore and critique new cultural contexts and the technologies that evoke them. Is there such a thing as a social 'web aesthetics'? It is one thing to criticize Twitter and Facebook for their primitive and bland interface designs, but is it possible to imagine the techno-social in completely different ways? Could we maybe

design and implement new interfaces that give us more freedom to enable our mediated selves to be the evolving and layered identities we know ourselves to be? In this session we will present a few examples of artistic interventions in well-known social media platforms, and discuss their role and impact.

Moderator: Josephine Bosma (NL)

Speakers: Thomas Cheneseau (FR), Tobias Leingruber (DE), Walter Langelaar (NL), Alessandro Ludovico (IT), Olia Lialina (DE)

Session 3 (15.30 – 17.30)

The Private in the Public

The advent of social media has eroded privacy as we know it, giving rise to a culture of self-surveillance made up of myriad voluntary, everyday disclosures. New understandings of private and public are needed to address this phenomenon. What does owning all this user data actually mean? Why are people willing to give up their personal data, and that of others? How should software platforms be regulated?

Moderator: Lonneke van der Velden (NL)

Speakers: Raoul Boers (NL), Nūsta Nina (NL), Arnold Roosendaal (NL), Frederik Zuiderveen Borgesius (NL), Seda Gürses (TR/BE), Caroline Nevejan (NL)

Conference day 2:

Saturday, March 10 2012

Location: TrouwAmsterdam, Wibautstraat 127, 1091 GL Amsterdam

Session 4 (11.00 – 12.30)

Software Matters

One of the important components of social media is software. For all the discourse on sociopolitical power relations governed by corporations such as Facebook and related platforms, one must not forget that social media platforms are thoroughly defined and powered by software. We need critical engagement with Facebook as software. That is, what is the role of software in reconfiguring contemporary social spaces? In what ways does code make a difference in how identities are formed and social relationships performed? How does the software function to interpellate users to its logic? What are the discourses surrounding software?

Moderator: Korinna Patelis

Speakers: David M. Berry (UK), Anne Helmond (NL), Carolin Gerlitz (UK), Ganaele Langlois (CA), Harry Halpin (UK)

Session 5 (13.30 – 15.30)

Pitfalls of Building Social Media Alternatives (Debate)

It is not only important to critique and question existing design and socio-political realities but also to engage with possible futures. The central aim of this project is therefore to contribute and support 'alternatives in social media'. What would the collective design of alternative protocols and interfaces look like? We should find some comfort in the small explosion of alternative options currently available, but also ask how usable these options are and how real is the danger of fragmentation. How have developers from different initiatives so far collaborated and what might we

learn from their successes and failures? Understanding any early failures and successes of these attempts seems crucial. A related issue concerns funding difficulties faced by projects. Finally, in what ways does regionalism (United States, Europe, Asia) feed into the way people search for alternatives and use social media.

Moderator: Caroline Nevejan (NL)

Taking part in the debate:

Carlo v. Loesch/lynX (DE) from Secushare, Michael Rogers (UK) from Briar, Elijah Sparrow (USA) from Crabgrass, Spideralex (ES) from Lorea and James Vasile (USA) from Freedombox.

Session 6 (15.45 – 17.30)

Social Media Activism and the Critique of Liberation Technology

While the tendency to label any emergent social movement as the latest 'Twitter revolution' has passed, a liberal discourse of 'liberation technology' (information and communication technologies that empower grassroots movements) continues to influence our ideas about networked participation. This discourse tends to obscure power relations and obstruct critical questioning about the capitalist institutions and superstructures in which these technologies operate.

As the first years of euphoria are over, the wild west style data digging companies are facing resistances from every level: single users campaign against facebook's ubiquitous data collections as well as nation states and the EU are slowly understanding the urge to push wild west 2.0 back into a regulated framework. Once Social Media is integrated into a larger framework of policies and laws, once its place in society reflects a position negotiated by stakeholders, states and privacy commissioners, will such a normalised commodification of communal communication simply be accepted?

Moderator: Oliver Leistert (HU)

Speakers: Philipp Budka (AT), Stefania Milan (CA), Max Schrems (AT), Eleanor Saitta (USA)

2. Blogposts

Tijdens de voorbereidingen van de 'Unlike Us #2' conferentie, gedurende de conferentie en na afloop is er net als op voorgaande events een team van bloggers actief geweest. Diepte interviews en onderzoeks-blogposts zijn geschreven door medewerkers van het Institute voor Netwerkcultuur: Michelle Oosthuyzen, Marc Stumpel en Serena Westra. Een team van studenten die verbonden zijn aan de opleiding New Media and Digital Culture aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam en de Universiteit Utrecht hebben een verslag van een aantal sessies van de drie conferentie dagen gemaakt: Catalina Lorga, Lisa van Pappelendam, Rania Dalalaki, Reinier Vriend, Ryanne Turenhout, Nicola Bozzi en Orsolya Gulyas. Dit team heeft alle presentaties bijgewoond en heeft hier live verslag van gedaan. Achtereenvolgens treft u alle blogposts aan die geschreven zijn van oud naar nieuw. De interviews, onderzoeken en verslagen van de conferentie vormen samen een prachtig overzicht van alles wat er zich ontwikkeld heeft gedurende Unlike Us #2. Over het algemeen zijn de blogposts in het Engels.

Unlike Us: What to expect in 2012

Posted: January 5, 2012 at 4:57 pm | By: marcstumpel | | [2 Comments](#)

2011 was an exciting year with the [Occupy movement](#), Facebook's [settlement](#) with FTC's charges, [Europe versus Facebook](#), decentralized social media [alternatives](#) developing, critical [social media art](#), more awareness about [tracking](#) and a significant wave of [criticism](#) after Facebook's new [changes](#). Moreover, the [Unlike Us](#) research network was launched at the Cyprus University of Technology, Limassol, where the first [conference](#) was held.

Now in **2012**, we are looking forward to [Unlike Us #2](#) in Amsterdam. Artists, designers, scholars, activists and programmers will gather to analyze the economic and cultural aspects of dominant social media platforms and discuss alternative, decentralized social media software.

Unlike Us #2 will be a three day event: showcases of alternatives in social media on 8 March 2012 and a two day conference on 9, 10 March, 2012. Visit the [program](#) for more details. In addition to a second and possibly a third conference this year, the research network will produce publications derived from (conference) contributions. If you would like to get involved, please join our [mailinglist](#) and [contact](#) us.

To contrast the overly positive business-minded 'predictions' for 'social media' in 2012, here is my take on what we could expect: ten ideas in no specific order.

1: The decentralization of everything Decentralized social media software will grow in popularity and attract more users. 'Search' will be next; [YaCy](#) is a fully decentralized search engine that we can already use. Finally, regarding video sharing alternatives, [Plumi](#) will enable you to create your own video sharing site.

These projects could very well be a sign of things to come. The sky is the limit, not the corporately owned 'cloud'.

2: More and more people leaving Facebook German privacy NGO [FoeBuD](#) is planning '[Social Swarm](#)': a coordinated campaign, much larger than [QuitFacebookday](#), to switch to a 'good' alternative for 'Faceboogle'. [@Not_On_Facebook](#) will keep retweeting every 'I-quit-facebook-tweet' and selling 'not on facebook' t-shirts. With more users leaving, more convincing 'this-is-why-I-quit' blogposts will be written ([outstanding example](#) given). In 2012 leaving Facebook will be cool!

3: The survival of privacy The age of privacy is far from over. In fact, we are still making sense of the private, the public, the entities that force us to lose control over our data and the ones that enable us to reclaim it. Meanwhile, Europe versus Facebook is [winning](#), EPIC is working hard to [fix Facebook's privacy fail](#), and [@privacypamp's](#) ([#privchat](#)) is taking place weekly on Twitter. It's going to be a great year for privacy advocates.

4: Hardware for private, secure and anonymous communication The [Freedombox](#) project is working on a device that enables turnkey privacy, security and anonymity. FreedomBox is a personal server running a free software operating system and free applications, designed to create and preserve personal privacy by providing a secure platform upon which federated social networks can be constructed. This year we might be able to buy freedom out of the box!

5: An increased focus on mobility With [40% of visits](#) to Facebook coming from the mobile app and activists in need of mobile privacy/anonymity, software developers are challenged with finding new mobile solutions for (their) decentralized social media software. Although there already are a lot of great mobile apps out there, such as [Orbot](#) (Tor for Android), [Vibe](#) for (Occupy) activists and [Textsecure](#) for encrypted texting, mobile social media alternatives are just starting to develop.

6: Dataveillance revisited Whether it is Facebook [spying for free](#), tracking our Web browsing behaviour, or the Federal Government [spying on social media](#) ('Face.Book.Intelligence.'), reeking surveillance practices should be disclosed and properly investigated. Dataveillance is likely to enter the political agenda in 2012.

7: Facebook free zones 2012 will be the year of Facebook-free-zones. Enter the first one [here](#).

8: Internet Censorship legislation and its countermeasures The draconian [SOPA and PROTECT-IP](#) censorship legislation bills will soon clash with Google, Amazon, Wikipedia, eBay, Yahoo, and Twitter who are considering to go 'nuclear' and [go black](#) in protest against the bills. Why bother, when hackers are [building a distributed satellite ground station network](#)? In other words, a [SOPA Free Satellite Internet](#).

9: Code Year Thousands of Internet users have decided to learn to code with Codecademy in 2012 as their New Year's resolution. 2012 is the [Code Year](#)!

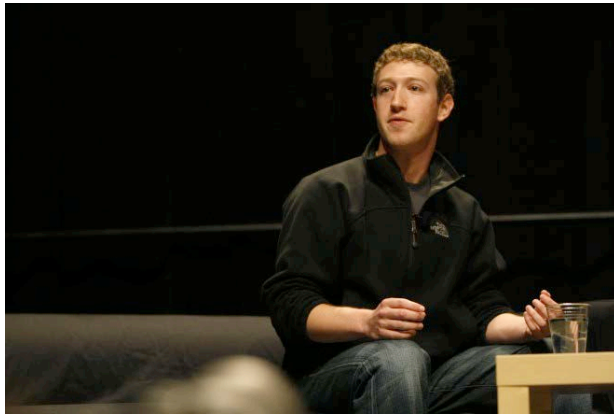
10: Social media fatigue It seems that we are growing tired of social media. For some, particularly Facebook has become too crowded and too chaotic. That is why [nobody goes to Facebook anymore](#). Let's redefine the 'social' and thrive on better network cultures .

Happy New Year!

Facebook's 'Letter from Zuckerberg': The Annotated Version

Posted: February 2, 2012 at 12:30 pm | By: marcstumpel |

BY TIM CARMODY – WIRED



Mark Zuckerberg giving the keynote at SXSW conference in 2009. Photo: Jim Merithew/Wired.com (CC BY-NC 3.0)

Facebook's [Form S-1 Registration Statement with the Security and Exchange Commission](#) includes details on the IPO itself and the company's financial condition as well as a [letter from founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg](#) to current and potential shareholders — aka the whole world. It discusses the company's business and technological philosophy and what Zuckerberg calls its "social mission" — i.e., "to make the world more open and connected."

Statements like these serve as a manifesto, a declaration, a founding document for the company and its future. It's useful to pay them close attention. As Zuckerberg writes: "We think it's important that everyone who invests in Facebook understands what this mission means to us, how we make decisions and why we do the things we do."

Below is the full text of the letter, with apposite commentary and analysis. Unless otherwise indicated, everything in indented blockquotes is commentary, and all emphases (except for section headers) are mine.

LETTER FROM MARK ZUCKERBERG

Facebook was not originally created to be a company. It was built to accomplish a *social mission* — to make the world more open and connected.

Sometimes to accomplish a social mission — whether it's Google's attempt to organize the world's information or Microsoft's to put a computer on every desktop — you need to build a company. And sometimes companies get so large, ubiquitous, and profitable that they need to have a social mission to legitimize their activity and give them something to work towards beyond cashing checks.

We think it's important that everyone who invests in Facebook understands what this mission means to us, *how we make decisions and why we do the things we do*. I will try to outline our approach in this letter.

"I am tired of you people misunderstanding Facebook. This is why you should buy into our vision and let us do what we want."

At Facebook, we're inspired by technologies that have revolutionized how people spread and consume information. We often talk about *inventions like the printing press and the television — by simply making communication more efficient, they led to a complete transformation of many important parts of society*. They gave more people a voice. They encouraged progress. They changed the way society was organized. They brought us closer together.

If you invoke the printing press and you don't seem totally out of your mind, you're swinging for the fences.

Today, our society has reached another tipping point. We live at a moment when the majority of people in the world have access to the internet or mobile phones — the raw tools necessary to start sharing what they're thinking, feeling, and doing with whomever they want. Facebook aspires to build the services that give people the power to share and help them once again transform many of our core institutions and industries.

Note that here, Zuckerberg hedges on whether it's Facebook that he's comparing to the printing press and television or the ubiquity of the internet and mobile phones. On the one hand, internet and phones are "the raw tools" that produce "the tipping point." On the other, Facebook and the services it "aspires to build" are what will "once again transform many of our core institutions and industries."

It's quite a tap-dancing act here. On the one hand, Zuckerberg wants to evoke a feeling of a revolutionary change, like the advent of the television or the personal computer. On the other hand, he doesn't want to actually claim credit for social revolutions, nor does he want to make it seem as if this is a hippy-dippy, pie-in-the-sky company. He lands hard on that last word, "industries."

There is a huge need and a huge opportunity to get everyone in the world connected, to give everyone a voice and to help transform society for the future. The scale of the technology and infrastructure that must be built is unprecedented, and we believe this is the most important problem we can focus on.

Again, fascinating to me that Zuckerberg talks about Facebook as “infrastructure,” a word we usually reserve on the internet for fiberoptic cables and such. Social networks are the new plumbing.

It also suggests that Zuckerberg sees Facebook not just as a website or even a platform, but as part of the fundamental services that shape the future of the web.

We hope to strengthen how people relate to each other.

Even if our mission sounds big, it starts small — with the relationship between two people.

Nice: not only is this immediate, personal and understandable, but it helps justify Facebook’s basic topological principle, symmetry. If I have a relationship with you, you have a relationship with me. Facebook allows users to “follow” each other’s public updates, but at its core, it’s never hedged from that original concept, which it inherited from Friendster and other social networks. Relationships are a two-way street.

Personal relationships are the fundamental unit of our society. Relationships are how we discover new ideas, understand our world and ultimately derive long-term happiness.

At Facebook, we build tools to help people connect with the people they want and share what they want, and by doing this, we are extending people’s capacity to build and maintain relationships.

People *sharing more* — even if just with their close friends or families — creates a *more open culture* and leads to a better understanding of the lives and perspectives of others. We believe that this creates a *greater number of stronger relationships between people*, and that it helps people get exposed to a greater number of diverse perspectives.

I think that if there’s anything Zuck’s truly passionate about, it’s this: that there’s something broken about how we hide and mask ourselves with other people, and that our lives would be better if we were more open. He’s had to learn over time how quickly to accelerate those principles and give people time to adjust.

By helping people form these connections, we hope to rewire the way people spread and consume information. *We think the world’s information infrastructure should resemble the social graph — a network built from the bottom up or peer-to-peer, rather than the monolithic, top-down structure that has existed to date.* We also

believe that giving people control over what they share is a fundamental principle of this rewiring.

“Rewire” = our wires and networks, but also our psychologies. Has Zuckerberg read Marshall McLuhan?

We have already helped more than 800 million people map out more than 100 billion connections so far, and our goal is to help this rewiring accelerate.

We hope to improve how people connect to businesses and the economy.

We think a more open and connected world will help create a stronger economy with more authentic businesses that build better products and services.

No astroturfing, please.

As people share more, they have access to more opinions from the people they trust about the products and services they use. This makes it easier to discover the best products and improve the quality and efficiency of their lives.

Reputation and recommendations — going beyond gaming into something now.

One result of making it easier to find better products is that businesses will be rewarded for building better products — ones that are personalized and designed around people. We have found that products that are “social by design” tend to be more engaging than their traditional counterparts, and we look forward to seeing more of the world’s products move in this direction.

Our developer platform has already enabled hundreds of thousands of businesses to build higher-quality and more social products. We have seen disruptive new approaches in industries like games, music and news, and we expect to see similar disruption in more industries by new approaches that are social by design.

In addition to building better products, a more open world will also encourage businesses to engage with their customers directly and authentically. More than four million businesses have Pages on Facebook that they use to have a dialogue with their customers. We expect this trend to grow as well.

If you’re not on board, get on board. Because this is where your customers will expect to find you.

We hope to change how people relate to their governments and social institutions.

We believe building tools to help people share can bring a more honest and transparent dialogue around government that could lead to more direct

empowerment of people, more accountability for officials and better solutions to some of the biggest problems of our time.

By giving people the power to share, we are starting to see people make their voices heard on a different scale from what has historically been possible. These voices will increase in number and volume. *They cannot be ignored.* Over time, we expect governments will become more responsive to issues and concerns raised directly by all their people rather than through intermediaries controlled by a select few.

Through this process, we believe that *leaders will emerge across all countries who are pro-internet and fight for the rights of their people*, including the right to share what they want and the right to access all information that people want to share with them.

On the one hand, this is awesome. On the other, there goes China.

Finally, as more of the economy moves towards higher-quality products that are personalized, we also expect to see the emergence of new services that are social by design to address the large worldwide problems we face in job creation, education and health care. We look forward to doing what we can to help this progress.



Image by Facebook, from the company's S-1 filing with the SEC

Our Mission and Our Business

As I said above, Facebook was not originally founded to be a company. We've always cared primarily about our social mission, the services we're building and the people who use them. This is a different approach for a public company to take, so I want to explain why I think it works.

I started off by writing the first version of Facebook myself because it was something I wanted to exist. Since then, most of the ideas and code that have gone into

Facebook have come from the great people we've attracted to our team.

Most great people care primarily about building and being a part of great things, but they also want to make money. Through the process of building a team — and also building *a developer community, advertising market and investor base* — I've developed a deep appreciation for how building a strong company with a strong economic engine and strong growth can be the best way to align many people to solve important problems.

Simply put: we don't build services to make money; we make money to build better services.

Expect profits to be regularly reinvested into growing the company, not hoarded or dished out in dividends. Facebook is taking [the Amazon approach](#) to Wall Street: *We're building something for the future. Back off.*

And we think this is a good way to build something. These days I think more and more people want to use services from companies that believe in something beyond simply maximizing profits.

By focusing on our mission and building great services, we believe we will create the most value for our shareholders and partners *over the long term* — and this in turn will enable us to *keep attracting the best people* and building more great services. We don't wake up in the morning with the primary goal of making money, but we understand that the best way to achieve our mission is to build a strong and valuable company.

Note that Zuckerberg isn't just signaling to investors, reporters, and business partners with this letter. He's also trying to capture the hearts and minds of a generation of engineers. If Google doesn't look so non-evil anymore, Apple looks like Scrooge McDuck sitting on a pile of money, and Microsoft looks like it's long disconnected from its original team and founders, Facebook wants to be the place for people who want to build things with the original team that will last long into the future.

This is how we think about our IPO as well. We're going public for our employees and our investors. *We made a commitment to them when we gave them equity that we'd work hard to make it worth a lot and make it liquid, and this IPO is fulfilling our commitment.* As we become a public company, we're making a similar commitment to our new investors and we will work just as hard to fulfill it.

"If I had it my way, we'd probably stay private forever. Instead, I'm giving the people around me millions of dollars. I'm okay with this."

The Hacker Way

As part of building a strong company, we work hard at making Facebook the best

place for great people to have a big impact on the world and learn from other great people. We have cultivated a unique culture and management approach that we call the Hacker Way.

I suspect that if this approach is really unique, it probably doesn't resemble what I think of as anything like "the hacker way." In fact, I suspect both of these things.

The word "hacker" has an unfairly negative connotation from being portrayed in the media as people who break into computers. In reality, *hacking just means building something quickly or testing the boundaries of what can be done*. Like most things, it can be used for good or bad, but the vast majority of hackers I've met tend to be idealistic people who want to have a positive impact on the world.

The Hacker Way is an approach to building that involves *continuous improvement and iteration*. Hackers believe that something can always be better, and that nothing is ever complete. They just have to go fix it — often in the face of people who say it's impossible or are content with the status quo.

This may have been cut and pasted from a dozen or so different pages on agile web development.

Hackers try to build the best services over the long term by quickly releasing and learning from smaller iterations rather than trying to get everything right all at once. To support this, *we have built a testing framework that at any given time can try out thousands of versions of Facebook*. We have the words "Done is better than perfect" painted on our walls to remind ourselves to always keep shipping.

I love the "alternate worlds" approach to software design. For some reason I imagine Zuckerberg sitting in a room with thousands of screens, like Ozymandias in Watchmen watching all the different versions fly by to look for the secrets of the universe.

Hacking is also an inherently hands-on and active discipline. Instead of debating for days whether a new idea is possible or what the best way to build something is, hackers would rather just prototype something and see what works. There's a hacker mantra that you'll hear a lot around Facebook offices: "*Code wins arguments*."

Hacker culture is also *extremely open and meritocratic*. Hackers believe that the best idea and implementation should always win — not the person who is best at lobbying for an idea or the person who manages the most people.

This is a very powerful idea, and I suspect this may be one statement that comes back to haunt Facebook. It's very difficult as companies and the people who run them get older for them to maintain this open, freewheeling, anti-hierarchical kind of anti-organization in favor of something more traditionally managerial.

Contrast this too with [Apple's approach of assigning a DRI or "directly responsible](#)

individual” for every product. One person, his or her vision, his or her reputation on the line.

To encourage this approach, every few months we have a hackathon, where everyone builds prototypes for new ideas they have. At the end, the whole team gets together and looks at everything that has been built. Many of our most successful products came out of hackathons, including Timeline, chat, video, our mobile development framework and some of our most important infrastructure like the HipHop compiler.

To make sure all our engineers share this approach, we require all new engineers — even managers whose primary job will not be to write code — to go through a program called Bootcamp where they learn our codebase, our tools and our approach. *There are a lot of folks in the industry who manage engineers and don't want to code themselves, but the type of hands-on people we're looking for are willing and able to go through Bootcamp.*

Little of this seems to be related to shareholders anymore. I think Zuck might be reusing material from a company retreat.

The examples above all relate to engineering, but we have distilled these principles into five core values for how we run Facebook:

Focus on Impact

If we want to have the biggest impact, the best way to do this is to make sure we *always focus on solving the most important problems*. It sounds simple, but we think most companies do this poorly and waste a lot of time. We expect everyone at Facebook to be good at finding the biggest problems to work on.

Move Fast

Moving fast enables us to build more things and learn faster. However, as most companies grow, they slow down too much because they're more afraid of making mistakes than they are of losing opportunities by moving too slowly. We have a saying: “Move fast and break things.” The idea is that if you never break anything, you're probably not moving fast enough.

Be Bold

Building great things means taking risks. This can be scary and prevents most companies from doing the bold things they should. However, in a world that's changing so quickly, you're guaranteed to fail if you don't take any risks. We have another saying: “The riskiest thing is to take no risks.” We encourage everyone to make bold decisions, even if that means being wrong some of the time.

Be Open

We believe that a more open world is a better world because people with more information can make better decisions and have a greater impact. That goes for running our company as well. We work hard to make sure everyone at Facebook has access to as much information as possible about every part of the company so they can make the best decisions and have the greatest impact.

Facebook famously has open floor plans and glass walls in its offices for this reason.

Build Social Value

Once again, Facebook exists to make the world more open and connected, and not just to build a company. We expect everyone at Facebook to focus every day on how to build real value for the world in everything they do.

Thanks for taking the time to read this letter. We believe that we have an opportunity to have an important impact on the world and build a lasting company in the process. I look forward to building something great together.

That's Zuckerberg's statement of principles for Facebook and its future. Are you surprised? Intrigued? Skeptical? Convinced?

Mirror mirror on the Facebook wall...

Posted: February 9, 2012 at 8:19 pm | By: Michelle Oosthuyzen | Tags: [facebook](#), [reality](#), [self-love](#), [social](#), [social media](#)

Warning: objects in this mirror may not correspond with



reality We all have those 'friends' on Facebook that splatter their daily lives all over the Facebook walls. They display their daily lives in an overly positive and exaggerated way in an attempt to make even the most common activity seem more interesting than it actually is. Although we generally find this behaviour annoying and have a good laugh about it with others, in some degree we might secretly recognize this behaviour because it is the kind of behaviour that Facebook in particular and (most) social media platforms in general are cultivating.

Nowadays technologies have the ability, or better said, the power to recreate and actively construct reality, which continuously influence our ideas of 'the social'. Therefore we need to ask ourselves: what kind of 'social' are they actually creating?

While Mark Zuckerberg's dream is about sharing our lives and creating a social and connected world, we actually see a paradox arising. While everything seems worth sharing on Facebook, at the same time nothing is good enough and everything is pimped up as a result of something that I refer to as digital narcissism. The line that separates sharing from showing off becomes thinner and thinner, which means that the digital images of ourselves are mostly depicted as better than they actually are which creates an enhanced and augmented mode of reality. In my opinion this is not a development that should be encouraged.

Nick Bilton from The New York Times sarcastically writes about a "[borderline Digital Narcissistic Personality Disorder](#)" that is currently fed by one of Facebook's newest features called the [Timeline](#). He writes: "Don't get me wrong, I like seeing pictures of myself just as much as the next nerd, but Facebook's Timeline takes self-obsession to a level that feels too egocentric". Who doesn't sometimes catch themselves [admiring](#) their own profile first when logging into Facebook before actually looking at other profiles?

So why do we fall so easily in love with ourselves with the help of social media? If we should believe psychoanalyst Jaques Lacan, it's human nature. When a child looks into the mirror, it will begin to identify itself with his ideal self and simultaneously hopes and desires are being projected on an image; the child's mirror being. Our digital Facebook identity could be perceived as such a mirror being, a projection of our ideal self. Referring to Eli Pariser metaphor in his book [The Filter Bubble](#) (2011), we are in need of a healthy diet when it comes to self-expression. Facebook on the other hand takes advantage of our sweet tooth and (without much resistance) feeds us with too much dessert instead of the vegetables we actually need for a healthy balanced social life.

While this seems a bit exaggerated, we should take this phenomenon seriously because it could be responsible for creating blind spots when it comes to our online privacy when using these social media platforms. To put it bluntly, Facebook takes advantage of our narcissistic nature in order to gather information for commercial use without large-scale resistance. The same way as children don't worry about tummy aches when eating candy, Facebook users don't worry about their personal data while 'Facebooking'. It is no wonder that Facebook is often regarded as being [addictive](#); always longing for more likes, more friends, more attention.

The question remains: how do we cure our narcissistic behaviour, or can't we? It is time to start critically looking into the mirror instead of admiring it and see how social media like Facebook have turned us into self-loving subjects.

Alternative Social Media Software. Soon near you!

Posted: February 16, 2012 at 2:12 pm | By: marcstumpel | | [1 Comment](#)

Facebook makes everyone believe There Is No Alternative, but Unlike Us dares to differ.

With the [Unlike Us #2 conference](#) in sight (8-10 March, TrouwAmsterdam), it's

exciting to realize that alternative social media software developers will be showcasing their projects soon. In addition to demonstrations, they will discuss their principles, aspirations and challenges for developing their software. Seven initiatives will take the floor on March 8:

[Briar](#), [Crabgrass](#), [Freedombox](#), [Lorea](#), [Secushare](#), [Thimbl](#) and [Unhosted](#).



Briar: A Secure News and Discussion System The Briar project is building a news and discussion platform to enable people in authoritarian countries to communicate without fear of government surveillance or censorship. We're developing software that uses whatever media are available locally — from internet connections to Bluetooth, WiFi and even USB sticks — to create encrypted, delay-tolerant networks for distributing news, files and conversations.

Learn more about Briar at <http://briar.sourceforge.net/>



Crabgrass: online social organizing and group collaboration Crabgrass is a software libre web application designed for social networking, group collaboration and network organizing. Our goal is to create communication tools that are tailored specifically to meet the needs of bottom up grassroots organizing. While social movements have grown more adept at using the web to communicate publicly, we are still mostly using inadequate tools to communicate amongst ourselves. Most groups rely heavily on email, lists, and wikis—but these tools are not suited for the complexity of relationships that activist organizations face in the real world. The internet may herald a deep change in democratic communication, but the internet is simultaneously the most effective tool for mass surveillance ever devised. The goal of Crabgrass is to become a secure alternative to surveillance-based online tools that most activists rely on today.

Learn more about Crabgrass at <http://crabgrass.riseuplabs.org/>

FREEDOM BOX

FreedomBox will put in people's own hands and under their own control encrypted voice and text communication, anonymous publishing, social networking, media sharing, and (micro)blogging. FreedomBox integrates privacy protection on a cheap plug server so everybody can have privacy. Data stays in your home and can't be mined by governments, billionaires, thugs or even gossipy neighbors.

Learn more about Freedombox at <http://freedomboxfoundation.org/>-



Lorea is a seedbed of free social networks linked by federation protocols that allow them to communicate. Lorea is not just software, but also a technical and political tool for the federated web, bringing back autonomy, freedom and total control over our data and our memory to the hands of the users of social networking sites themselves. The federation knocks down the walls of the panopticon 2.0 run by corporations and political interests, and offers a non-profit alternative to regain our technological sovereignty in the world of social networks. The project is aimed at civil society as a whole, i.e. Citizens and social collectives and political change organisations that are motivated by the desire to interact, share, change things together, devise solutions. We seek to address all people and groups who value their online identities and their security and privacy . We value the right to freedom of expression, and the right to share information and knowledge and do so within a free and neutral social web.

Learn more about Lorea at <https://lorea.org/>



Most applications have become dependent on Internet servers with serious man-in-the-middle privacy implications. You might expect in the year 2012 we should have technology that allows us to deliver messages or data between phones and

computers in absolute safety, but this isn't the case. Exchanging keys is a hassle, protocols are inefficient and side effects of encryption need to be considered. **Secure Share** intends to provide a new communication paradigm for the Internet as it enables applications to interact securely between the personal devices of people while letting servers be of occasional help in an innocuous way. It combines a flexible and efficient social communications protocol (PSYC2) with an advanced encrypted routing technology (GNUnet). One such application for this would be a social platform equivalent to Facebook, but distributed and encrypted straight from your phone or desktop. In this workshop we'll try to get some undeniable privacy onto our phones and laptops for a start.

Learn more about Secushare at <http://secushare.org/>



Lost in the hype of the "Social Web" is the fact that the Internet has always been about sharing: For decades, Usenet, Email and IRC have been enabling social connections, including citizen journalism, photo sharing, and other features of recent web-based systems. Such decentralized platforms were not controlled by any one organization, and do not directly capture profit, thus these platforms were not of interest to Capital. On the surface, **Thimbl** appears to be yet another microblogging service, similar to Twitter or identi.ca. However, Thimbl is simply a client model for the user Information protocol called Finger. The Finger Protocol was originally developed in the 1970s, and as such, is already supported by all existing server platforms.

Learn more about Thimbl at <http://www.thimbl.net/>



UNHOSTED.ORG

Unhosted: personal data freedom The web is not as open as it used to be: monopoly platforms formed new proprietary layers on top of it. But we create a better architecture for the web. We break the package deal »you get our app, we get your data« with remoteStorage, a cross-origin data storage protocol separating application servers from per-user data storage. Users should be able to use web services they love but keep their life stored in one place they control – a »home folder for the web«. At the same time, application developers shouldn't need to bother about providing

data storage. We also believe that freedom on the web is not achieved by freely licensed web applications running on servers you can't control. That's why applications should be pure Javascript which runs client-side, all in the browser. It doesn't matter if free or proprietary – everything can be inspected and verified.

Learn more about Unhosted at <http://unhosted.org/>

Some of the developers will also take part in the 'Pitfalls of Building Social Media Alternatives' debat on saturday March 10 at the Conference: [Carlo v. Loesch/lynX](#) (DE) from [Secushare](#), [Michael Rogers](#) (UK) from [Briar](#), [Elijah Sparrow](#)(USA) from [Crabgrass](#), [Spideralex](#) (ES) from [Lorea](#) and [James Vasile](#) (USA) from [Freedombox](#).

During the showcases expect an artist performance: [FB Bureau](#) by Tobias Leingruber (DE).



The FB Bureau (fbbureau.com) is showcasing and handing-out personal Identification cards for Facebook citizens. The “offline” FB identity cards are a pilot project in early testing phase, and will be handed-out to a very limited number of conference visitors for beta testing porpose. Be the first among your friends to pick-up your personal FB identification card and explore a future where governmental passports are obsolete in favour of Facebooks' superior identity management system.

After the showcases it's time for **Unlike Art**

Bits of code, snippets, plugins and projects investigating social media by Networked Media students of Piet Zwart Institute (Rotterdam)

On the occasion of lectures, workshops and prototyping sessions, Networked Media students often dealt with the field of social media. As a result, a series of works in progress, experiments and ideas that question social media from different points of view, such as, for instance: online identity, monetization of data, privacy, online-offline boundaries.

Works by Dušan Barok (SK), André Castro (PT), Mirjam Dissel (NL), Eleanor Greenhalgh (UK), Fabien Labeyrie (FR), Jonas Lund (SE/NL), Sebastian Schmiege (GE), Bartholomäus Traubeck (GE), Danny Van Der Kleij (NL), Jasper Van Loenen (NL), Marie Woche (GE), Dave Young (IE). Moderated and curated by Silvio Lorusso (IT).

Check out the projects at <http://networkcultures.org/unlikeart>

Finally, Coralie Vogelaar (NL) will briefly present her book *Dearest Tinkebell* and Joris van Hoboken (NL) will give a talk about the the Dutch digital civil rights movement *Bits of Freedom*.

Wish to attend Unlike Us on March 8? Please register at [rsvp\[at\]networkcultures.org](mailto:rsvp[at]networkcultures.org)

Facebook's Dirty Secret About its Dirty Job

Posted: February 23, 2012 at 10:44 am | By: Michelle Oosthuyzen | Tags: [content moderator](#), [critique](#), [dirty job](#), [facebook](#), [social media](#) | [1 Comment](#)



As one of the most influential online social media platforms, Facebook thrives on the distribution of its users 'private' data and is therefore highly dependent on the concept of [transparency](#). Over the years it has however become clear that founder Mark Zuckerberg doesn't seem to enjoy the taste of his own medicine. Facebook has always been secretive and unclear when it comes to what goes on behind the scenes of their social factory, which doesn't come as a big surprise because the less the public knows about Facebook's governance, the less resistance they will receive. Recently [Gawker](#) has shown in a very painful way that not everything can be hidden behind the veil of social democratic innocence.

Acting out some form of revenge, 21-year old Amine Derkaoui has provided Gawker with the [Operation Manual for Live Content Moderators](#) in order to give e an insight into the dirty job that is moderating Facebook content. While [research](#) has pointed

out that most users tend to uphold a positive image on Facebook by posting only their best pictures and coolest status updates as a direct result of impression management and identity formation, Derkaoui in contrary demonstrates that it is not all about rainbows and butterflies on Facebook. On Facebook everyone can join and take the stage in order to perform one's identity and engage in social interaction. On the other hand, Facebook also gives a voice to the scum of the earth as explained by one moderator:

"Think like that there is a sewer channel and all of the mess/dirt/ waste/shit of the world flow towards you and you have to clean it"

Another former content moderator stated his reason for quitting the job after three weeks:

"Pedophilia, Necrophelia, Beheadings, Suicides, etc, I left [because] I value my mental sanity."

One of the pages of the manual shows an **overview** of inappropriate content categorized into the following categories: 'Sex and Nudity', 'Illegal Drug Use', 'Theft Vandalism and Fraud', 'Hate Content', 'Graphic Content', 'IP Blocks and International Compliance' and 'Credible Threats'. While some degree of gate keeping is necessary and totally reasonable, in the case of Facebook it can also be worrying as Gawker explains:

*"(...) walking the line between keeping Facebook clean and excessively censoring its content is tricky, and Facebook's zealotness in scrubbing users' content has led to a series of uproars. Last April, they deleted an **innocent gay kiss** and were accused of homophobia; a few months before that, the removal of a **nude drawing** sparked the art world's ire. Most recently, angry "lactivists" have been staging protests over Facebook's deletion of **breast-feeding photos**."*

Although Facebook thrives on transparency, they also will do anything to control it, which in this case means putting a part of this responsibility in the hands of content moderators. We can all imagine that being confronted with this kind of content can take a toll on one's psychological health. More shocking is that the people who work 4-hour shifts to perform this dirty job, come from third world countries such as India, Philippines and Mexico and receive \$1 per hour plus commissions, which eventually add up to around \$4 per hour. According to Gawker, most content moderators are 'young and well-educated' and want to make some money on the side. What is also interesting is how these outsourcing firms are never explicitly linked to Facebook. Of course, Facebook doesn't want to smear their 'good reputation' with some form of third-world exploitation, which according to Derkaoui, is exactly what this is.

Written by Michelle Oosthuizen

Source: <http://gawker.com/5885714/inside-facebooks-outsourced-anti-porn-and-gore-brigade-where-camel-toes-are-more-offensive-than-crushed-heads>

Identity on Facebook: even who you are is defined and controlled by Facebook

Posted: March 1, 2012 at 10:41 pm | By: Serena Westra |



While Michelle Oosthuyzen asked herself last week ‘what kind of social are we creating on Facebook?’ I would like to change this question into ‘what kind of identity are we creating on Facebook?’ But before I answer this question, I would like to examine to what extent Facebook’s software mechanisms are influencing the construction of identity on Facebook. Media researcher Lev Manovich rightfully claims: ‘if we don’t address software itself, we are in danger of always dealing only with its effects rather than the causes: the output that appears on a computer screen rather than the programs and social cultures that produce these outputs’ (Manovich, 2008: p. 4-5).

Interestingly, the creation of identity on Facebook is not solely done by users themselves; Facebook has significant influence in construction of information and identity too. Not only by content moderation as explained last Thursday, also through software, algorithms, interface and a predefined set of options. What users view on the site and even who they can be is consciously controlled by the social network site.

How exactly does this influence on Facebook identity work? First of all, users have to stick to the interface created by the software of Facebook, in contrast to platforms like MySpace where you can edit HTML code yourself. This means that Facebook users are limited to expressions with words, pictures, the like button and friends, rather than interface, colors and design which can be very personal too. Besides, users have to stick to the tools provided. An example is the Like button. Users can only ‘like’ something; a ‘hate’ tool does not exist. Users have three options if they do not like content: write a comment about the negative feelings, completely delete the content from their Wall or News Feed (if possible), or mark the post as spam or abusive. In other words, disliking something on Facebook is harder and has more radical consequences than liking something.

Second, profile information is limited by the amount of options Facebook offers; e.g. you can either be a male or female. This can be problematic for countries like Thailand where you can legally be a ‘Kathoei’ (third gender). Hence the ability to create a unique online identity is limited. The reason why is unclear. I foresee a commercial reason: it is easier to sell private information when it is simplified.

Third, algorithms have significant influence on user’s Facebook identity too. For

example, the friendship suggestion algorithm is influencing the choice of friends and the newsfeed algorithm has great influence on what information of who appears. There are ways to circumvent this, but this takes some effort for the user; if users want to create their own newsfeed in order of importance, they have to rank every friend they have.

As a result, identity on Facebook is not a reflection of ones actual being: it is an outcome of both decisions made by users and Facebook's software. If the preferences, information and interface on Facebook cannot be fully the choice of the user, can the identity shown on Facebook be? No, it can't. There is a discrepancy between the intentional identity on Facebook by users and the final Facebook identity that appears on the site. Unfortunately, Facebook users do not really have a choice but to stick to predefined way Facebook operates, or to stop using it at all. Which to many isn't even considered an option because of the fear of being excluded.

Modern-Day Privacy

Posted: March 5, 2012 at 1:36 pm | By: Michelle Oosthuyzen |



Facebook has been accused of violating the privacy of its users over and over again and the amount of private data that Facebook is harvesting is enormous. A fact that has been proven by Law-student [Max Schrems](#) when Facebook surprisingly met his request and send him a hardcopy of all the data they ever collected of him. The result was 1,222 PDF files containing all sorts of personal information like status updates, likes, relationships and photo's, even those who he thought he had deleted.

The question that comes to my mind is: what can be understood as privacy in the age of social media? Privacy is one of those concepts that is hard to grasp, ever changing and highly subjective. The private/public dichotomy that underlies the concept of privacy understands information that has been exposed to others as public. The problem is that users tend to perceive Facebook as a quasi-private environment; a safe home, a notion that is of course encouraged by Facebook itself in order to win its users trust and keep them revealing personal information on the site.

Daniel Solove explains very well why our traditional black and white / all or nothing sense of privacy doesn't fit our current era of social technologies:

“Privacy is a complicated set of norms, expectations, and desires that goes far beyond the simplistic notion that if you're in public, you have no privacy. (...) We

often don't want absolute secrecy. Instead, we want to control how our information is used, to whom it is revealed, and how it is spread.”

I agree with the relationship that Solove points out between privacy and the amount of control a user has over the visibility and accessibility of information. Well known social media theorist Clay Shirky also claims that “privacy is a way of managing information flow” and the notion of *filter failure* underlies privacy issues on social media platforms.

The problem with this point of view is that it may implicitly argue that the solution of privacy violation lies in (more) technical controls, which according to James Grimmelman are ineffective and incompatible with “*the social dynamics of privacy*”.

Another interesting point that Grimmelman makes is that besides passing on personal information to third parties, most privacy violations are peer-to-peer as a result of the technical design that is based on the core social philosophy of Facebook: sharing information.

“The dark side of a peer-to-peer individual-empowering ecology is that it empowers individuals to spread information about each other. These are not concerns about powerful entities looking down on the network from above; they're concerns about individuals looking at each other from ground level.”

Although most social media users seem to accept a loss in privacy when it comes to the distribution of personal data for commercial and marketing interests, they aren't as willing to compromise privacy when it comes to peer-to-peer information flow. Users don't want their mother or employee to come across a drunken picture of them celebrating a Friday's night out because their friend decided it would be 'cool' to publish it on Facebook AND tag your name without notice. Likewise they don't want their broken heart broadcasted on Facebook's newsfeed for 'the whole world' to read after their ex-lover changed his/her relationship status into single after a horrible break-up.

Jonathon Berlin illustrated on his blog how the up's and down's of a relationship are documented and can be turned into a *modern day love story* with the help of Facebook's News Feed. Strange but true.

Another contradicting but interesting *research* concludes that users are somewhat indifferent towards privacy risks and seem to take certain privacy costs for granted as a result of social motives that drive the use of social media.

While it is likely that the difficulty of controlling privacy settings and the users' level of media literacy play an important role, this result furthermore indicates that one's attitude towards privacy has indeed shifted and is perhaps unique when it comes to social media. By acknowledging the unique character and boundaries of privacy on social media sites like Facebook, we can begin to ask ourselves how we can design these sites so that privacy works the way we want it to work.

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Unlike Art: Criticizing Facebook with Art

Posted: March 8, 2012 at 4:30 pm | By: Serena Westra | Tags: [Networked Media](#), [Piet Zwart Institute](#), [Unlike Art](#)



Thursday the 8th of March started with a showcase of alternative social media. Representatives of Crabgrass, Freedombox, Lorea, Secushare, Briar, Social Swarm, TheGlobalSquare, Thimbl and Unhosted were present. After a short introduction by the representatives, the audience was free to walk around and have a chat with the alternative media developers.

Next, [Silvio Lorusso](#) took the floor and introduces the artists of the [Unlike Art](#) session. Twelve Networked Media students of [Piet Zwart Institute](#) (Rotterdam) came to present their work. 'A lot of projects are experiments and works in progress' says Silvio, the moderator and curator of the session. 'We hope to inspire others with the projects.'

The first project was '[The Fruitsalad Enigma](#)' by Dave Young. Dave is looking at different ways to create a micro social network in a social network. For this project, he worked on an algorithm to use on Facebook with the goal to trigger a debate and do something that is playful and provocative. The Fruitsalad enigma converts words into fruits. For example, 'Hi how are you' is converted into: 'pomegranate lemon grapefruit orange lemon kiwi watermelon grapefruit raspberry lemon grapefruit lemon pomegranate grape?' For Dave, the strength of the encryption is not really important; the project is more about 'what does this mean' and 'how can you trigger people to talk about it'. The converter can be used inside Facebook or as a browser plugin. When used as a build-in text window, the converter could for example be used for a status update on Facebook.

The second project presented was '[Radical X](#)' by Eleanor Greenhalgh. She described

her project as a new experimentation about privacy in social media.

'Radical X is a platform for sex-positive, activist art making and writing. It hosts participatory projects that explore the role of sexuality as a radical political force. It's a space for subversive, playful, critical creativity that makes links between the political and the up-close-and-personal.'

The aim of the project is to create sexual freedom and initiate 'people for people' by getting persons to think more about this, and to get them in control of their own data. 'If your data is on another server, it you are still not in control' says Eleanor. To get people to think about these topics, Eleanor created Radical X. She wants to invite people who are still using Facebook to post radical content to the project. She is also looking for people who can host it and for physical safeguarding of radical content. How far does solidarity go? What are they willing to host? She wants to get people to help others to exchange (radical) data that might be censored on Facebook.

Third, Jonas Lund took the floor. Silvio Lorusso called his project 'very ambitious' and I think he is right. Jonas wants to break the Guinness World Record of most comments on a post in China with the project '[Behind the Great Firewall of Facebook](#)'. However, China has a censorship on Facebook so you cannot use it inside the country borders. The inspiration of the project came from a lady who holds the record now. She broke the record by asking friends to post comments on her status. Together each of the 170 friends posted an average of 9.000 comments, an incredible high amount. Jonas didn't ask his friends for help, but made an algorithm to post comments. He made a script that posted every two seconds something on a post on Facebook while he was in China. To break the record, 23 days were needed, but unfortunately the computer crashed after one day because of a lack of memory. He made a solution for this problem by creating a Google Chrome extension. This adds a button and if you click on it, it will start commenting. Hopefully he can break the Guinness World Record soon.

Students Bartholomäus Traubeck and Jasper Van Loenen presented the [Facebook Poking Machine](#). This is a small device that converts Facebook pokes into physical pokes by connecting the machine to an android phone. According to Bart and Jasper, the poking function of Facebook does not really make sense because it is virtual so you don't feel the poke. With the machine, they want to bring the function of poking back from the virtual sphere to the body. There are three steps you have to take in order to use the machine:

Step 1. Friend the person you want to poke
Step 2. Poke him on Facebook
Step 3. The person will get a poke by the machine (a small box connected to you body with a small string)

During their presentation they say 'it is not really spectacular' but it made the audience laugh and the point was clear: to make people think about how to bring the virtual sphere of Facebook back to you body, and how to connect different devices.

Next, Andre Castro and Jasper van Loenen presented their project '[You're Boring](#)'. 'You're boring is a FB-app in which real stories of people who find out FB monitoring

or censoring contents are adapted so one's friends can become the protagonists' says Andre. When using this app the user will be able to find his/her friends being confronted with Facebook's tactics to monitor and control its users activities. Andre and Jasper are looking for people who are abused, deleted or censored on Facebook in order to tell their story on the 'You're boring app'. For example, the breastfeeding group on Facebook was deleted, but 'You're Boring makes their story visible again and shows the characters of the stories. The project is still in an early stage.



Danny Van Der Kleij and Mirjam Dissel presenting "Lost in TOS2, picture by David Berry

The terms of service of Facebook is pretty long and boring, so students Danny Van Der Kleij, Mirjam Dissel and Fabien Labeyrie made a text based game out of it: [Lost in TOS](#). 'Begin your journey in the terms of services' says the game when you start playing. 'We found a lot of similarities between labyrinth games and the terms of service of Facebook' says Mirjam Dissel. 'It makes you think about what is actually is said there. It is a big wall of text.' With the game they want to give insight in the TOS and make people aware of the fact that the TOS is very hard to understand. The three students are still working on it, e.g. on getting gold so you can hire a lawyer in the game to understand the TOS better.

Dusan Barok developed '[Faceleaks](#)'. This project allows Facebook users to leak pictures of friends, with the consequence that even though their pictures are private, the whole world can see them. Private and deleted pictures on Facebook are public on Faceleaks. He developed a browser add-on that added a 'leak button' to Facebook pictures. People are free to install it and it is already used quite heavily. Deleted Facebook pictures are also deleted on Faceleaks, since Faceleaks deeplinks them straight from the Facebook servers.

Dusan is also working on another project: [artwiki.org](#). The idea is to make all the submissions of artists public using semantic media wiki software. Yesterday they opened the site. On the site, artist can have a profile with information about their political standpoints. A person in the audience asks: 'How did artists reacted to the fact that they have a profile with political information and that this is at the same level as the field of work or gender?' Dusan answers that the aim is not really to make a platform for political work, but more to show that artists are political too. However, the political views are totally voluntarily.

For reasons of time one of the project showcased in the Unlike Art webpage was not presented to the audience. [The John Smith Extension](#), by Eleanor Greenhalgh, Jonas Lund, Sebastian Schmiegl, Marie Wocher, is a Chrome add-on that transform

any users in Facebook and Google+ to “John Smith”, the most common name in these social media.

The session showed that Facebook can be more than a social media platform: it can be an inspiration for art. The works of the Piet Zwart students makes people think about Facebook on a different way. Their website can be found [here](#).

Coralie Vogelaar: “We are our own Big Brother”

Posted: March 8, 2012 at 5:33 pm | By: Michelle Oosthuizen |



After the artistic and often humoristic projects of the students of the Piet Zwart institute in Rotterdam in order to criticize dominant social media platforms, Coralie Vogelaar gave us an interesting point of view on hate mail in the context of privacy.

In response to the huge collection of hate mail that Vogelaars friend [Tinkebell](#) had received for turning her cat into a handbag in the name of art, Volgelaar decided to turn the roles around and opened an investigation into the people who send these hate mails. This project resulted in a book called *Dearest Tinkebell*, which includes all the thousands of hate mails and information about the senders including their photos, addresses and personal weblogs. “Most of them seem like very nice people”, Vogelaar explains. In turns out that people who send hate mail are a lot like you and me. To make her point, Vogelaar demonstrated that the people who send hate mails are actually a lot like the students of the Piet Zwart institute who just presented their work..

What Vogelaar for instance noticed is that some of the hate mail senders like to make pictures of themselves and tend to show some narcissistic character traits. Which isn't a surprise because according to research, narcissistic personalities have the tendency to think they are right. Doing a web search on the Piet Zwart students, Vogelaar concluded that some of them also had similar 'narcissistic tendencies' and she had the Facebook pictures to proof it. This also turns out to be the case with other particularities such as posting comments/ photo's regarding drinking, behaviour that some of the students of Piet Zwart institute also tend to exhibit (although surprisingly few).

Of course Vogelaar didn't want to accuse these students of being hate mail senders (although they could be). What Vogelaar tried to point out in contrary to the prevailing view on privacy, is that in the end privacy isn't only violated by institutions and that Big Brother isn't only some high institution or social media platform like Facebook. Privacy violation also works peer-to-peer because in the digital age, we can all keep an eye on each other: "We are our own Big Brother".

Bits of Freedom in Defense of Digital Civil Rights of Social Media Users

Posted: March 8, 2012 at 6:00 pm | By: Michelle Oosthuyzen | Tags: [Bits of Freedom](#), [BOF](#), [digital civil rights](#), [freedom](#), [Joris van Hoboken](#), [privacy](#), [social media](#)



Representing the Dutch online civil rights organization [Bits Of Freedom](#) (BOF), Joris van Hoboken gave an overview of the organization's work on Internet communication freedom and privacy related issues and more specifically in the context of social media. Since 2009 BOF acts as the protector of Dutch citizens' online freedom and privacy in the digital age and has already spurred change in this respect.

In the context of online communication freedom BOF has for example been able to initiate change by passing a [net neutrality bill](#) by the Dutch parliament last year. Although the bill still needs to be passed by the senate, this event marks a significant victory for BOF and brings them one step closer to obtaining their goal of online communication freedom and creating strict net neutrality requirements.

When it comes to the protection of online privacy, BOF is concerned with issues like the protection of personal data, internet filters, copyright enforcement and [data retention](#); a law that obligates telecomm communities and internet server providers to store records for long periods of time and keep these records available for law enforcement and national security agencies.

According to van Hoboken, BOF wants to expand their focus on issues concerning social media. The topics that they primarily have been working on include raising awareness by following discussions, explain and point out important developments and discuss the debate on privacy settings on platforms like Facebook. In the footsteps of Unlike Us #2, BOF also tries to raise awareness about the existence of alternatives to dominant platforms and have already explored [privacy friendly initiatives](#) like [FreedomBox](#) and [Diaspora](#). Furthermore BOF is currently concerned with datamining and investigates how law enforcement and police request information of users on social media in the context of, for example, investigations. Another point of focus is privacy law breaches and the enforcement by data protection authorities in Europe. Does Facebook for example actually abide the European law? An interesting question which Max Schrems and his [Europe versus Facebook](#) group have been looking into.

When it comes to communication freedom online, BOF's focus is on user restrictions which in the case of social media refers to the user's freedom in using the platform in their own way and for their own purposes. Furthermore BOF is also exploring the legal responsibilities of services like Facebook and hosting sites in general. Van Hoboken explains that this may also concern the alternative platforms because they might also have to deal with legal restrictions and possible responsibilities when for example censoring the content of their users.

Another great annual initiative of BOF that raises awareness around privacy infringement in a somewhat informal and humoristic setting are the Big Brother Awards that shed a light on the biggest privacy violators in the Netherlands. Not surprisingly, [Facebook has won the award](#) in the category 'companies' on the 7th of March in de Pakhuis de Zwijger because, according to BOF, despite a series of serious privacy breaches, Facebook still decided to sale a percentage of stock to the public.

While van Hoboken has shown how BOF has already made an impact in the field of online privacy and communication freedom, they want to expand their focus on social media in 2012. "Social media is one of the topics that we are really interested in", says van Hoboken. However BOF doesn't yet have a clear agenda in the context of social media, which means that determining the most pressing issues in which they could achieve the best results regarding an open Internet and protect privacy, is a priority. "That is one of the reasons why it is interesting for us to be here", explains van Hoboken, "to see what kind of discussions take place and where could we provide added value". BOF will for example actively look into options such as restriction.

Some of the problems their organization has already detected concerns data protection regulation, privacy rules of Europe and better enforcement of existing laws since Facebook is not complying with the legal framework that is currently in place. Other areas on which BOF could actively contribute are censorship on dominate social platforms and access to records. The latter refers to the alarming process of data mining: "What you see is that companies try to exploit the fact that they are sitting on all of the content of their users".

However van Hoboken reiterates that the role of BOF in defending digital civil rights

of social media users in particular still remains somewhat of an open question. BOF will therefore follow the issues that will arise during the Unlike Us #2 event with a close eye.

Jodi Dean Says: “There Is No Such Thing as the Social”

Posted: March 9, 2012 at 10:00 am | By: Catalina Iorga | Tags: [actor-network theory](#), [antagonism](#), [bruno latour](#), [defining the social](#), [democracy](#), [facebook](#), [jodi dean](#), [social](#), [social media](#), [social what](#), [twitter](#), [UnlikeUs](#), [what is the social?](#)



After Geert Lovink’s enthusiastic welcome speech, which also introduced *Social What? Defining the Social*, the first session of [UnlikeUs #2](#), **Jodi Dean** (pictured right) took to the stage and launched into a passionate presentation – that made excellent comic use of Lego-inspired imagery – to explain how there is no such thing as society or the social. Dean began weaving her argument against centralization critique by first introducing three understandings of ‘the social’ – or better said, the lack thereof – and how social media would look should it be constructed according to each of these three viewpoints.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Jodi Dean’s presentation)

First, there is the **neo-liberal stance on society**, which posits that there are individual men and women, as well as families, but that society as a collective does not exist. In this frame of thought, “every man for himself” is the motto and institutions such as the army, which are the products of volunteers making the individual choice of joining, is the epitome of a non-social institution.

Neo-liberal social media would be highly individualistic and competitive, quite similar to the feel and atmosphere of a modern corporation. In such a space, people would find not only ways to measure themselves and check out the competition, but they would also try to identify partners, either for personal relationships or professional ones. According to Dean, neo-liberal social media could be summarized in three words: competition, alliance, procreation.

The second view on the absence of the social comes from Bruno Latour and **actor-network theory**. Here, the non-existence of society or the social is not necessarily a problem since the social can be retraced with the proper technology. People can put things back together to recapture the assemblages of social moments and movements.

Actor-network social media would be more for its own sake populated by fun apps and new ways to interact. Unlike neo-liberal social media, this space would be less profitable and goal-oriented as people would take more pleasure in a platform’s

modulating and evolving software.

Last but not least, the third perspective, that of **radical democracy**, was articulated by theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe in their *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* book (Verso, 1985). **Radical democracy** embraces difference and antagonism, disagreement and conflict, as key phenomena that condition the very existence of this type of democracy. While actor-network theory makes sense of the world in terms of things, this understanding of “social” interaction pays more attention to dividing or unifying forces.

Radical democratic social media would be a terrain of struggle, perpetually changing and deconstructing itself. People would always contest the uses of such social media and the software architectures of these platforms, which would find themselves in a permanent state of turbulence.

Dean maintains that all these views are somehow grounded in neo-liberalism, that none think in terms of a center of political power, of a myth of authority that gives structure to society. If society doesn't exist, one would expect social media to match all these views. One might even expect social media not to exist.

But it does exist, Dean claims, and it conforms to all of the theoretical standpoints outlined above. Social media emerged from mutual constitution, disperses across competitors that people have been creating for years. If social media was the result of a mutual effort, then, Dean believes arguments against centralisation and for more individual control, privacy and autonomy, are completely unfounded.

She complained that media theorists are stuck in time, presenting the same solutions since technotopia and California theory: distributed, decentralized and contingent are better than their opposites. Dean also denounced our generalized mistrust of networks, the need for impossible guarantees and our endless paranoia: we can never be secure enough, we can never have enough privacy.

The core of her argument was that dispersion is in fact the problem, since decentralisation causes fragmentation and dilution of work, giving rise to hire-by-the-task freelancers or so-called “cloud workers”, as those hired by IBM. Solutions offered by media theorists only make things worse, amplifying noise and increasing dispersion.

Emergent centralised units are, to Dean, the products of free choice and natural consequences of distributed networks. Oddly enough, if more distribution is attempted, the more likely it becomes that centralisation will emerge. The bigger the network, the stronger its members, Dean says while asking to not weaken the collective power of people by dispersing it.

Dean emphasized the benefits of the hub and centralization as an expression of the personal desire to be part of something bigger than oneself. The pleasure of social media, she claimed, is that of connectivity as a direct reaction to precarious labour. In social media, people produce for others all the time; whether those products are

affect / emotions or all kinds of content, they powered by a productive force that arises of our combined efforts.

Finally, Dean encouraged media theorists to remove their veil of ideological illusion and to stop repeating the mantras of neo-liberalism as if they have any substance. Treating centralisation as the problem distracts attention from the real issues: **property and ownership**, the fact that Facebook and Twitter are not ours.

What can we do about that? Overthrow capitalism and move away from privacy concerns that keep people chained in individual units, Dean said. As the cliché goes, easier said than done, but enough food for thought to last media theorists and the UnlikeUs #2 audience for the rest of this first day.

Written by *Catalina Iorga*

“What is Reification 2.0?”, Asks Dylan Wittkower

Posted: March 9, 2012 at 11:00 am | By: lisavanpappelendam | Tags: [commodification](#), [Dylan](#), [Dylan Wittkower](#), [Encircling](#), [facebook](#), [identity](#), [Mark Zuckerberg](#), [Reification 2.0](#), [relationships](#), [The Social Network](#), [UnlikeUs#2](#), [Wittkower](#)



Reification 2.0 runs parallel to Web 2.0. We are continuously taking an active role in this online process of reification. We reify ourselves and others. Or so claims **Dylan Wittkower** (pictured right) on the morning of March 9th, 2012. Wittkower starts his talk at the [Unlike Us #2](#) conference with an explanation of David Fincher’s movie *The Social Network* (2010). He is particular about addressing the falsehoods that lie therein. Was the motion picture not intended as a documentary of the life and work of **Mark Zuckerberg**? Not really. There is a superimposed morality about how Zuckerberg spent his college years. But who wants to know anything about that? We seem to prefer getting the uncensored details on how he is doing rather than what he is doing to us, Facebook users.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Dylan Wittkower’s presentation)

And there, the social network lurks around the corner and, according to Wittkover, the trail of myths starts. Fincher seems to have directed a movie to express his personal opinion on Facebook, which finds itself embodied in the character of Zuckerberg, just like “we tend to call Frankenstein’s monster Frankenstein”, Wittkover playfully adds.

So what are the **falsehoods** woven into *The Social Network*? Wittkover elaborates on how Zuckerberg is persistently portrayed as the devil. As if he were the entity that brought self-awareness to Adam and Eve. As if he were the personification of manipulation, with his only goal being the creation of connections to satisfy his obsession with social and economic status.

However, it is not Facebook that ended “the social”, Wittkover claims as he draws from Immanuel Kant and Mark Granovetter. Kant proposed that humans are perhaps unable to be moral beings. We might be (solely) driven by self-interest. Granovetter professed that it is not the high quality of their education that is the decisive factor of success for Ivy League students. It is the people they meet and the relationships they establish with them that guarantees a prosperous life.

Here is where Wittkover introduces the term **commodification** in his talk, even though he does stress that **reification** is his primary concern. It refers to the transformation of ourselves and others into **objects**. Commodification, reification and mobilization of social and personal relations are all taking place on Facebook. The platform shows us to one another as if we were things rather than as agents. Individuals are lost into **abstractions**, such as labor and money, and appear in economic structures instead of wandering within the social. Our sociality seems based in the free enterprise.

Just before treating his audience to a delightful photograph of his own cat, for reasons that remain slightly unclear, Wittkover notes that fortunately a higher level of self-awareness now exists within discussions of “the social” of social media. However, it is a **myth** that awareness lingers in the minds of social media users when it comes down to their own partaking in reification.

Wittkover goes on to categorize the key elements affected by Reification 2.0, namely relationships, others and the Self. When it comes down to **relationships**, we need to rebuild the architectures of code that formerly controlled and managed identity within self-presentation. There is both a necessity and a desire to present ourselves in different ways, different contexts and to different communities, which we need to keep separate. Wittkover focuses here on the theory of **encircling**, based on Martin Heidegger’s *Enframing*. The definition of relationships needs to lie in code and centers on characteristics such as asymmetry and opaqueness. We are ordered and challenged by our roles, again defined by relationships, by code. Our relationships are no longer under constant negotiation, which finds itself open for momentary reevaluation.

Reification of **others** can occur in both an aggregate and individual way. In the most expressive fashion – aggregation – we treat and discover others as objects. On Facebook we are concerned with collecting friends, social gaming mercenary

advertising, *friendertainment* and asking the network. We consider our Facebook friends to be sources of diversion and virtual commodities, and windows to the viral. Clearly enough, the latter refers to an individual as a communications hub and thus as a technological object. The individual manner of reifying others is illustrated by status friending, perceiving others as locations and disconnecting expression from agents.

In building for consumption and exposure of identities – thus Reification 2.0 of the **Self** – Wittkower points out three basic strategies. Firstly, there is **mixed exposure**, characterized by limited access to communities and performed through encircling, selectiveness of RL social graphs and indirect communications. Secondly, **agonistic exposure** privileges a Self that may be unacceptable or challenging to communities. Finally, **lowest-common denominator exposure** sees an individual performing a safe identity, which centers on accessibility and acceptability through limited and curated exposure.

Wittkower also discusses four main strategies of **identity construction** on the spectrum of proactive, reactive, unitary and divergent. An **untidy** identity – found at the corner of proactive and divergent – relies on the actions of others, such as tagging, in the making of an individual's online presence. A **spectacular** identity – proactive and unitary- draws on Guy Debord's notion of the *spectacle*. It is an experience of the Self as a thing, protecting itself outwardly and ridden with interpassivity and simulacrazation. A **distributed** identity – reactive and divergent – is constructed on the walls of others, on group pages or on fan pages. A **lurking** identity – reactive and unitary – does just that: lurks around the Web and takes no further action. Wittkower believes that some of these strategies will resolve into more meaningful forms of interaction. Whereas friendertainment might lead to teleboredom, asking the network may very likely lead to fruitful conversation.

Wittkower concludes his talk by elaborating on his main concerns with regards to the issue of “the social” of social media. How we present others and the Self may no longer be open to discovery due to an overkill in constructiveness. We are weighed down much more that we used to be. We are no longer subject to interruption of the image that we strive to project. Wittkower believes that too much emphasis is placed on the online doings of the spectacular identity and thus the negative unnecessarily continues to be emphasized. But then again why spend time on an untidy identity? It is only for those who have little to lose.

Beyond Facebook's Linearity in Time and Space: Thomas Cheneseau

Posted: March 9, 2012 at 1:00 pm | By: lisavanpappelendam | Tags: [Cheneseau](#), [conceptual](#), [facebook](#), [facebook art](#), [Facebook Feed](#), [French](#), [Hekkah Awr](#), [multimedia art](#), [Thomas](#), [Thomas Cheneseau](#) | [1 Comment](#)



Thomas Cheneseau (pictured right) is a French artistic researcher with a passion for abstraction and who considers social media as both his found object and his blank canvas. As part of the [second session](#), *Artistic Responses to Social Media*, at Unlike Us #2, Cheneseau talked about two of his visually stunning projects. First up was *Facebook Feedback*, an initiative that consists solely of art that he created through [his Facebook profile](#). Videos, images and code already existing on Facebook, as well as screenshots taken from Timelines, are transformed into collages and entirely new imagery. The visual material is then reloaded on Facebook, directly into a new creative space. After stressing that post-production is kept at a very safe distance, Cheneseau notes how he utilizes different graphics and tools such as [Glitch](#) in his artistic process.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Thomas Cheneseau's presentation)

For Cheneseau it is important to elaborate on how his approach does not resemble other artists' approaches to social media. For instance, he did not specifically select Facebook as his object of research as other critical artists might do. He merely considered the social network to be a most convenient canvas for his conceptual art. The main reason lies in its lack of limitation when reappropriating user profiles. Existing restraints in the interface, such as size and functions, are defied by Cheneseau, but always to benefit the visual aspect of his art. The ultimate goal is to creatively [counter the linearity](#) of Facebook's timeline, both in time and space. Cheneseau goes on to show lively examples of Facebook fan pages as his new playground. Again images from the social network are reappropriated, only this time around built up into modern-day iconography.

In 2009, Cheneseau started work on the second project he selected to discuss at UnlikeUs #2, *Hekkah Awr*. The project refers to acting without reality. It is a Facebook-based project as well as an interactive installation, where the program used collects news feeds posted on Facebook and generates them into new images and video's in real-time. In their reappropriated form, the news feeds find their words and sentences transformed into avatars and more in various shapes and sizes.

Every creative thought and process he described throughout his talk, Cheneseau illustrated by showing an array of [examples](#) taken from his "facebook art", which added a burst of color and complexity to his otherwise unpretentious presentation.

Dmytri Kleiner: The Responses of Thimbl, R15N and deadSwap to Social Media Platforms

Posted: March 9, 2012 at 1:15 pm | By: Rania (Ourania) Dalalaki | Tags: [artistic responses](#), [Artistic Responses to Social Media](#), [deadSwap](#), [Dmytri Kleiner](#), [microblogging](#), [miscommunication platform](#), [open-source](#), [r15n](#), [social media](#), [telekommunisten.net](#), [Thimbl](#), [Transmediale 2010](#), [Transmediale 2012](#)

Dmytri Kleiner – the surprise speaker in the session Artistic Responses to Social media- presented three examples of free, open-source platforms created by himself and the [Telekommunisten](#). All three art projects, Thimbl, R15N and deadSwap aimed to revolutionize communication through performative, artistic interventions.

Starting his presentation, Kleiner highlighted that the Internet has always been about sharing and that it has always been decentralized. In this manner, the issue that we need to investigate is how we ended up having centralized social media monopolies from a very decentralized, multi-layered, distributed system.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Dmytri Kleiner's presentation)



Dmytri Kleiner: Artistic Responses to Social Media

Kleiner's first example of a performative alternative to social media, [Thimbl](#), is a free, open-source microblogging platform. Initially launched in [Transmediale 2010](#), Thimbl is decentralized, needs no software, implements the Finger protocol and is written in open-source code. Contrary to the broadly used microblogging platforms (like Twitter) when using Thimbl, you can be followed at your own domain.

Following Kleiner, Thimbl is something more than a social networking platform: it is essentially a performance of economy and social fiction. More extensively, the capital and society have to transform Thimbl into being and Thimbl will become reality once society and economy transcend its limitations.

[According to Thimbl's manifesto:](#)

Thimbl demonstrates the potential for integrating classic internet technologies into the Open Web. On the surface, Thimbl appears to be yet another microblogging service, similar to Twitter or identi.ca. However, Thimbl is a specialized web-based client for a User Information protocol called Finger. The Finger Protocol was originally developed in the 1970s, and as such, is already supported by all existing server platforms.

Thimbl offers no way to *sign up*. It is up to your own webhost, internet service-provider or system administrator to provide accounts. Virtually every server on the internet already has Finger server software available in its software repository. All that is required for any organisation to provide Thimbl accounts is to simply turn their Finger service on. In most cases, this would take the server administrator no more than a few minutes, after which all of their users could log in to thimbl.net and participate. So Thimbl is a call to arms for users to demand this option.

Most importantly, Thimbl has embedded within it a vision for the Open Web that goes beyond the web. For the web to be truly open it must integrate pervasively in to the internet as a whole. The internet has always has been much more than the web.

Dmytri Kleiner also introduced us to the **R15N** system, the official miscommunication platform of **Transmediale 2012**. This system revolutionizes communication as it works with any telephone, requires no phone credit and has the potential to share a message with an entire community. The system works through the construction of “phone trees”: its users subscribe through their phone number and send their message to a randomly selected recipients. The message is then broadcasted to the telephone network and will pass through its various nodes. Finally, the whole network is aware of the content of the message and

“With a bit of co-operation, R15N allows one call to reach an entire community!”

As a platform, R15N aims to demonstrate how data is distributed through a network. Moreover, R15N works through the co-operation of randomly selected people, determining the connection between the users. It is an experimental artwork that encourages community engagement and communication, forcing its members to act outside their social safety net.

Finally, Kleiner presented **deadSwap**: the offline file distribution system where participants are asked to covertly pass a USB stick from one to another. **deadSwap** was created as a social experiment of an offline, anonymous network of users based on the distribution of data, following SMS requests. Kleiner noted that **deadSwap** aimed to underline privacy concerns and experimented on circumvention techniques, the same way the **Web 2.0 Suicide Machine** offers an exit from social networking platforms. Ideally, the anonymous network would continue to swap files indefinitely. However, before the end of his presentation, Kleiner admitted that few **deadSwap** attempts survived longer than few hours.

*If you would like to experience R15N, the official miscommunication platform of **Transmediale 2012**, register on the project’s [website](#) and don’t miss the next live*

exhibition on March 19th.

Walter Langelaar: The Artistic Intervention of the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine

Posted: March 9, 2012 at 1:45 pm | By: Rania (Ourania) Dalalaki | Tags: [artistic responses](#), [Artistic Responses to Social Media](#), [facebook](#), [moddr_](#), [Walter Langelaar](#), [web 2.0 Suicide Machine](#), [WORM](#) | 1 Comment



Opening up the second section of the first day of the conference (Artistic Responses to Social Media on the 9th of March), Walter Langelaar introduced the [Web 2.0 Suicide Machine](#), its functionality in relation to social media platforms and the spectacle of reactions that followed the project's release.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Walter Langelaars presentation)

Introducing the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine

Langelaar mentioned that the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine was created by [moddr_](#), the media lab of [WORM](#), the Institute for Avantgardistic Recreation based in Rotterdam, NL. This particular art project had a striking impact as its launch and functionality were featured in some of the most influential online and broadcast media outlets worldwide (for instance: [Time](#) magazine, [BBC](#)).

The reviews that followed the project's release highlighted how different parties received the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine. The project was cited as a clever web site, "a nifty service that purges your online presence from these all-consuming social networks", a commercial product, an artistic intervention.

However, to find out what the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine really is, one must watch the promo video of the project as it speaks for itself.



[web 2.0 suicide machine promotion](#) from [moddr_](#) on [Vimeo](#).

All in all, the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine was created as art project that aimed to disrupt the normalcy of the user's online life in social networks by deleting the user's account. It was designed for users that wondered how life would be without their online presence in social networks, for those who wondered how much free time they would have if they didn't bother with their online [frenemies](#) and "social" obligations. The core idea behind the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine was to enable users to 'unfriend' in an automated fashion and to raise awareness on privacy issues, letting users know that they should be in control of their own data.

The Tale Behind a Movement of Social Suiciders

Langelaar informed the audience that the idea behind the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine originated in 2009. After all, in 2009 the world was already dominated by social networks; even the lingo that came with our favorite platforms was widely used. According to Langelaar, people in [moddr_](#) were inspired by the fact that "Unfriending" was marked as the word of the year by the Oxford Dictionary and its equivalent in the Netherlands. At the same time Queen's Beatrix Christmas speech on people's infatuation with short messages only strengthened their motivation to intervene to the scene.

Simple as that, during the Christmas holidays of 2009 and after a series of interviews, the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine came to life. Following the project's launch, a little more than 50000 users patiently queued to... virtually commit suicide, to scrub off their online personas from the net while they sat back and relaxed enjoying their real lives.

Langelaar noted that [moddr_](#) received a similar project shortly after the Suicide

Machine's release. Without them knowing, the [Burger King's app](#) preceded the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine and functioned under the same principle of deleting online friends. As a matter of fact, Burger King offered a free whooper for every 10 facebook friends a user sacrificed- that was, of course, before the application was removed by facebook in 2009.

How Does It Work, What Does It Do?

Following Langelaar, the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine was launched with the function to delete MySpace, LinkedIn and facebook accounts. In addition, many users requested to extend its "services" for Twitter, mainly for privacy reasons as in 2009 users gradually realized the extensive visibility of their [indexed-by-Google](#) Twitter accounts.

As far as the technological background of the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine is concerned, the software implemented an application that automated clicking (in this case, deleting) behavior. In that manner, instead of letting the user spend hours to manually erase a profile, the machine handled the deletion and generated a video memorial out of it. Moreover, all virtual suicides passed through the lab's server which sometimes led to awkward situations: for instance, once somebody requested to delete a MySpace account with approximately 26.000 friends which overwhelmed the lab's teeny tiny server for 3 days.

Legally Binding Reactions, Confused Media Reviews and a Touch of Good Humor

Moving on, Langelaar described how a series of reactions paused the project. At first, all providers blocked the server's IP address which was circumvented with the assistance of a global proxy network. Sadly, the "annoying" reality emerged as facebook initiated a legal process, not allowing the project to use [facebook's trademark](#) and commenting that the application could bloom, had it been developed within the facebook applications domain. Finally, after two letters from facebook, the [social networking platform deleted WORM's facebook profile](#), threatening to move further into legal action if the lab did not block the project. Not willing to spend years in courts, the initiative used this material for an experimental film, altering a South Park episode. It is worth mentioning that the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine keeps receiving dozens of requests daily, despite the fact that it is currently inactive.

Based on the project's extensive reviews in the media, outlets rather ignored the project's aesthetic side and focused on its functionality. According to Langelaar, media reviews cited the Suicide Machine as a product from an actual company, a commercial way to get out of social networks. On the funny side of the issue of confused reviews, moddr_ still receives requests to connect the services of the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine with that of... funeral homes.

What's New? What's Next?

Closing the session, Walter Langelaar mentioned that moddr_ is working on new version of the Web 2.0 Suicide Machine that will allow users to download an

application and perform the deletion on their own desktops. Lastly, Langelaar referred to a series of art projects that also underline the spirit of intervention in the (social) media reality, such as the [Facebook Life Sharing Project](#) that allows users to log in on facebook as [Philipp Teister](#), the [Bin Lover](#) project that sells out the content of user's trashbins as art and the [Give Me My Data](#) facebook application that helps users export their data out of facebook for reuse in visualizations, archives, or any possible method of digital storytelling.

Olia Lialina and '97 Web Melancholy

Posted: March 9, 2012 at 3:15 pm | By: reiniervriend | Tags: ['97 Web](#), [Digital Folklore](#), [Dragan Espenschied](#), [facebook](#), [Google+](#), [melancholy](#), [Olia Lialina](#), [UnlikeUs#2](#), [Upon](#), [Youtube](#)



[Olia Lialina](#) took the stage in the 2nd session of *UnlikeUs #2, Artistic Responses to Social Media*. During her presentation she introduced artwork she had created together with [Dragan Espenschied](#). Using the notion of 'digital folklore', [Upon](#) (2011) is their most significant contribution to the theme of social media, as it reinvents current such platforms "with the technology and spirit of of 1997". Lialina explained the choice for this project by pointing out the incomplete documentation on the 1990s Web. Driven by the inability to recover the non-archived Web, Lialina and Espenschied productively mobilised their own assumptions, based on fragmentary memories of actual participants and the "best effort" archive The Wayback Machine. Lialina was quick to reassure no forgery took place: the interpretations of Facebook, Google+ and Youtube are created with technology available in late 1997 and are viewable in Netscape Navigator 4.03.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Olia Lialina's presentation)

Frames were some of the new features of the '97 Web and, for the first time, allowed several HTML elements to be shown in the same window. Both extremely popular and controversial due to its problematic implementation, the frame disappeared from use in websites after 1997, an era during which it was quite successful and widespread.

Other quirky and clever features typify the precarious re-designs of the three websites: Google+ uses tables to arrange profiles in a circular manner, Facebook has a low-definition brick pattern as the background for its Wall and can't fit more than 16 friends on a page, while Youtube videos by design are few and lack details, needing ages to load.

These implementations aimed to go beyond the technical, simultaneously trying to echo the paradigm of how 'the social' was understood in Web '97, which gives the works its sense of melancholia and longing for a past that never existed. Lialina

succeeds in reflecting on contemporary Web realities by displacing these popular monoliths into an asocial Web that was – or seemed to be – relatively removed from the direct interference of large corporations.

Other reasons to choose the year of Our Lord 1997 was that, for the first time, complex online projects had become feasible, although most of such complex ideas only materialized ten years later. It was the beginning of a period in which the browser was not just a tool for viewing web pages, but also a platform for applications. Lialina described this as ‘the beginning of the future’. Revisiting this pivotal moment point launches a strong appeal, as it merges the science fiction of Terminator’s time travel with the magic of an idealized era, softened and blurred by the hands of time.

One of the important features of ‘Upon’ is the ongoing character of the project. Lialina explained that she will remain active on all three websites, posting, ‘voting’ and uploading new material, although the search for ‘97 Web videos has offered quite the challenge. But this search can continue endlessly: the commitment to the magic year will keep users in their temporal limbo: each year when the ball drops on New Year’s Eve, the date goes back to January 1st, 1997.



The second stage of reinterpretation for the new-old networks could start to take place when a technology loses its following in the here and now. In this case, Lialina indicated that the historical forgetfulness of the Web might pose a problem for historians of the future. Say, Google+ dies a quick and painless death tomorrow, and at the same time ‘Upon’ remains operational. How will the researchers of tomorrow know what to think of the 90s interpretation of 2000s social networking?

For their oncoming exhibition, Lialina will be working on a fourth neo-’97 website; this time, an incarnation of the pinboard site Pinterest is in the making. Asked if she had – like other speakers who reinterpreted Facebook – already received a ‘cease and desist’ letter, Lialina confided disappointedly to the audience that she hadn’t. The project had only received media attention under the heading of ‘hacker humour’. But the value of ‘Upon’ in reflecting on current cultural practices and the workings of our technological memory is definitely headline-worthy.

Raoul Boers & Nusta Nina: Disliking the ‘Like’

Posted: March 9, 2012 at 3:30 pm | By: reiniervriend | Tags: [consumer leverage](#), [digital narcissicism](#), [disliking the like](#), [European privacy laws](#), [facebook](#), [media literacy](#), [Nusta Nina](#), [privacy](#), [Raoul Boers](#), [UnlikeUs](#), [UnlikeUs#2](#)



During session three 'The Private in the Public' of the UnlikeUs #2 conference, Nusta Nina and Raoul Boers presented 'Disliking the Like'. Both speakers are lecturers at the Hogeschool van Amsterdam but in different fields, which gave the presentation a split focus, at once on the trying to understand the common success of Facebook from a digital culture and a law optic.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Raoul Boers' and Nusta Nina's presentation)

Nina and Boers introduced the topic of social media and privacy by showcasing the work of [Willem Popelier](#), a visual artist who featured in FOAM with his exhibit [Showroom Girls](#). When inspecting a laptop in a computer store, Popelier encountered over a hundred pictures that two young girls had taken of themselves, posing in the store in front of the web cam.

During the exhibition at FOAM Popelier had the live Twitter feed printed out real time, visualizing the social media reaction. During the course of the evening, friends had identified the anonymized girls and the online discussion took another turn when one of the girls' mother remarked that it was their own fault for being careless with their privacy. The girls weren't fazed; with no expectation of privacy they simply enjoyed the attention without recognizing a negative aspect.

What Boers and Nina underscored with this example is the different approaches to privacy amongst generations. The current generation might not be fully aware of privacy issues, but even when they are they seem unaffected, portraying what – often older - researchers have coined 'digital narcissism'.

These digital narcissists seem to ask: "What privacy?" They use social media to convey a version of themselves that can be used as a mirror using the possibility to get affirmation. They like it to be liked, showing a need for vulnerable narcissistic identity confirmation. At the same time they seem caught by the social need to take part; the power of the word 'like' is apparent as no one can easily withdraw from such an essential marker: we need to be liked.

Boers personal experience shows that an older generation doesn't always like using Facebook. They ask the question: "How much privacy is left?" They imagine Facebook as a Foucauldian panopticon, where their behavior is always visible, thus effectively influencing their behavioral choices, by default infringing their privacy.



The presenters went on to ask then why it is that with changing user policies and a negative perception of internet as democratic medium, social media have still grown so much? The answer they posed is the fact that currently social media function as a point of conversion. Attention is moving away from the traditional Web and since companies want to be where the customers are, both users and advertisers intensify this move, resulting in a handful of monoliths.

Then, it seems that narcissism is not the problem, but the difficulty is in the fact that the threshold for participation is so low. [OAuth](#) and [OpenID](#) are examples of services where people show to be willing to centralize their data for the sake of convenience.

Venturing into the legal side of privacy in social media, Nina then pointed out that protection of privacy is part of the EU charter of fundamental rights, and that this counts for data both online and offline. The European understanding of privacy is thus directly connected to the protection of data. In that light, Facebook's user-policy has not been helpful, as it has changed dramatically over the years with more and more data being public in default settings, and even when notified about changes, users are never consulted.

The American approach to privacy is, on the other hand, mainly consumer oriented. Industries have to self-regulate, which creates a bottom up scenario where markets can define privacy themselves, based on consumer trust and confidence. This means in practice that only if consumers complain, companies tend to change their policy. American companies operating in Europa thus find it hard to adhere to European privacy laws, but at the same time the big companies still have an amount of influence

Boers and Nina ended with a reflection on the question whether the way towards a change in Facebook's privacy policy was something to reach from the inside. Their claim was that the democratic power of the consumer can actually be productively be mobilized. To reach this, the presenters pose that three main requirements should be taken into consideration: consumer choice should be used as leverage, sharing of data should happen wisely and most importantly, media literacy is key in understanding the opaque playing field of private data and social media.

For the slide-show used in the presentation, look [here](#). For a short version of the paper presented, look [here](#). For the [video](#) of a recent presentation by Boers and Nina on [Bobcatsss 2012](#).

Arnold Roosendaal: Who Decides Who I Am Online?

Posted: March 9, 2012 at 3:45 pm | By: Rania (Ourania) Dalalaki | Tags: [Arnold Roosendaal](#), [online identity](#), [privacy](#)



During the third session on March 9th, *The Private in the Public*, [Arnold Roosendaal](#) argued how commercial companies construct our online identities, intruding to the users' individual autonomy by presetting choices and inclusion/ exclusion mechanisms.

Roosendaal stated that, at first sight, all users have to make choices in order to form their online representations. However, their impression of ultimate control over the way they represent themselves is mistaken.

Following that argument, a question rises: do we really decide who we are online? And if we don't, *who decides who we are online?*

(Click [here](#) for the video of Arnold Roosendaal's presentation)

According to Roosendaal, the core of our online identities derives from our virtual interactions and the fragments of data that we share. The datasets that are formed, and saved by third parties (and on the servers of social networking platforms, search engines, applications) represent ourselves even when we are offline.

Moreover, Roosendaal argued that as average users we cannot control the flow of information regarding our own identities. More extensively, focusing on the visible part of our online personas, we cannot control what is said about us, eg. by our "friends" on Facebook. A user's identity is constructed, compiled by the sum of shares and updates on social media, questions on search engines, requests for advice or directions and even mistakes and accidental posts. Despite the fact that we tend to be unaware of the visibility of our personas, commercial companies and platforms compile our typed attempts to communicate and form a very detailed profile of who we really are.

As Roosendaal noted, this is not such a revelation; at some point we all have wondered or read about privacy risks, cookies and business transactions that commodify our online profiles. What is new, is that we have reached that stage where the platforms and networks we use are our identity providers who can control what we see and how we socially interact. The identity providers decide how we can access platforms such as Spotify, how we can apply for jobs online, which adds match our personalities, what we are interested in etc.. In the era where we are supposed to be free to interact online, without borders of distance or time, we are not free to choose who we are online.

Returning to his key question, Roosendaal logically concluded that we are not empowered to construct our online identities: we do not decide who we are online.

Frederik Zuiderveen Borgesius on Online Audience Buying

Posted: March 9, 2012 at 5:00 pm | By: reiniervriend | Tags: [ad exchange](#), [audience buying](#), [audience selling](#), [Frederik Zuiderveen Borgesius](#), [online profiling](#), [UnlikeUs#2](#)



In session three 'The Private in the Public' of the UnlikeUs #2 conference, [Frederik Zuiderveen Borgesius](#) gave a very clear talk on 'The Ecosystem of Online Audience Buying'.

The example Zuiderveen Borgesius used to visualize the workings of online audience buying was that of a set of dresses that he had 'put' in an online shopping basket on a clothing site, to find that these dresses would haunt him for the next two weeks, popping up as advertising on a host of unrelated websites, reminding him of the cute frocks that would make him the star of this early springtime. To get behind the black box and unpack the mechanism of this phenomenon, the speaker split up the topic in two related parts: behavioral targeting and audience buying.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Frederik Zuiderveen Borgesius' presentation)

Zuiderveen Borgesius then started with an introduction on behavioral targeting. He described it as the monitoring of online behaviour of internet users over time, in order to build a profile of these users, to target them with advertising matching their inferred interests. These profiles can get increasingly detailed.

This profiling online is successful, yet tedious, and it is here where the importance of social media becomes apparent. Here the stakes are not only higher: as all parts of social interaction can be observed and profiles can be mended to a very high degree of nuance, but at the same time this self-created data in a fully private online environment is handed over by the users voluntarily. Social media derive income directly from offering advertising space, and some also sell user data to third parties, who themselves are in 'audience selling'. An example is Audience Science, a company that uses its very own [audience targeting table of segments](#) to pin point user profile's value for certain advertisers.



The second part of the presentation concentrated on audience buying and this is where Zuiderveen Borgesius indicated that the complexity sky-rocketed. With the user profiles in the hands of advertising companies and the like, these can be made

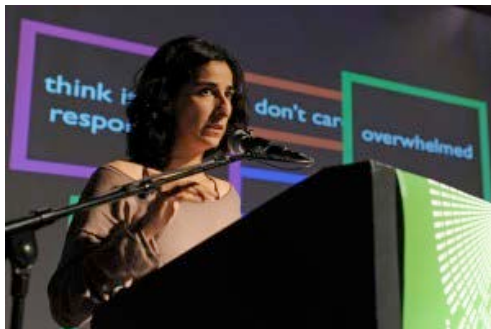
to profit when a user then visits a website where a banner ad is included in the design.

Your website visit sets off an ad exchange. The website publisher will indicate to interested parties (advertising agencies) that there is an empty spot for an advertisement ('black hole') to be auctioned off, and in real time on a fully automated basis, the value of the user profile is inferred by all the different parties and bids are put in place based on how much they believe is to be gained from presenting this user (male, academic, living in an upmarket area, interested in dresses) with their particular ad. The winner gets to place the ad and that is what is visible to the end user, once again presented with that pretty little dress next to his morning news online. All this happens within 75 milliseconds.

The speaker declared to be amazed by the intricacy of this mechanism, especially when the end return of people actually clicking on the ad is only heightened from two per mille to three per mille. The market seems currently quite unregulated and hundreds of parties are involved, analyzing, repacking data, selling profiles, tweaking advertising placement, and reselling improved profiles. Being referred to by parties in the industry as 'the wild west', Zuiderveen Borgesius noted that intensive research energy should be devoted to the phenomenon to fully grasp the challenges that the judicial field faces here.

Seda Gürses and Privacy in Online Social Networks

Posted: March 9, 2012 at 5:15 pm | By: lisavanpappelendam | Tags: [confidentiality](#), [control](#), [engineering](#), [Gürses](#), [infrastructure](#), [practice](#), [privacy](#), [responsibilization](#), [Seda](#), [Seda Gürses](#), [SNS](#), [SPION](#), [technology](#), [UnlikeUs#2](#) | 1 Comment



For session #3 *The Private in the Public*, **Seda Gürses** (pictured right), the coordinator of the interdisciplinary project Security and Privacy in Online Social Networks (SPION), was invited to speak about the technological responses to present-day privacy issues. SPION proved to be a very challenging and highly necessary endeavor to reconcile notions of privacy and technical privacy solutions within a particular social context.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Seda Gürses' presentation)

Gürses starts off by explaining what the engineering perspective, relating to her own academic background, within computer science is on *privacy*. The main question therein can be simplified into the following: What does a system need to do to enable privacy? The difficulty faced by engineers is that there is no singular notion of privacy and this singularity is exactly one of their critical requirements.

She goes on by asking the audience what the role is that our mother's maiden name – just to name one example – plays within online security. In the offline world, we saw a combination of financial institutions held responsible for guaranteeing consumer security. In the online world, we see the rise of online banking and a shift to both financial institutions and consumers themselves in responsibility with regards to online security. Suddenly the risk of identity theft reared its ugly head, which makes the quest for security solutions a pressing matter. Gürses clarifies how from then on security questions, such as your mother's maiden name, encryption and password models became part and parcel of our everyday (online) existence. This forces consumers to keep certain information regarding their lives a secret from others. Gürses refers to this process as **responsibilization in design**, where subjects are rendered responsible for their own privacy and security.

Before attempting to formulate a definition of *privacy* from a computer science perspective, Gürses playfully states various popular opinions of engineers regarding users. Users are considered to be indifferent, stupid and the weakest link. However, a different perspective might modify these opinions, Gürses claims. What if engineers and researchers kept in mind that in reference to social networks or social networking sites (SNS) users assume that it is the SNS provider that is responsible for guaranteeing a private and secure online environment for them? Research has shown that social media users are certainly overwhelmed by the potential dangers and feel incapable of judging the long-term risks.

Therefore, Gürses proposes that technical specialists retract the responsibilities from users and place them within technology, in other words the infrastructure, where they might indeed belong. Mechanisms would be activated to mitigate the negative effects of SNS. It all comes down to making SNS providers the true bearers of responsibility in privacy and security issues.

But what is privacy then? Gürses discusses three circulating definitions in detail. From the classical view of computer scientists, privacy is either **confidentiality or the right to be left alone** (Samuel D. Warren & Louis D. Brandeis 1890). If confidentiality is at stake, the solution can be anonymous communications. Mechanisms register that users must give up certain data about their behavior, but they can keep who you are in the source strictly confidential. Other solutions to privacy breaches can be dummy traffic, mixes or encryption. This is not to oversimplify matters, because there are in fact intangible factors within a user's environment that can pose as obstacles in this process of hiding information and identity. Within SPION, researchers are working on tools to protect confidentiality, for instance query forgery.

In the second definition, **privacy** is considered **as control** (again drawing from Samuel D. Warren). Central to this definition is the separation of identities and the protection of data along a certain principle. Individuals have the right to decide for

themselves what information they wish to share with which others. Driven by this second definition, the SPION team is working on robust access control models, agents that assist users, information flows controlled at the level of scripting and browser security in communications.

Finally, **privacy** is defined **as a practice**. Gürses illustrates how on SNS users do not decide individually about the use of data and identity. It is a social decision and restrains the user's freedom. The aspirations of SPION therefore also lie in advancing transparency, feedback and awareness on these platforms.

To round up, Gürses concludes that making privacy decisions is an extremely complex process. It is bounded by cognitive power. And she lists a small number of initiatives of SPION and their partners that aim to ease this process. For instance, together with researchers from [Carnegie Mellon University](#) experiments in *nudging* are done to stir citizens to behave in the required manner that enhances their *responsibilization*. Furthermore, SPION develops educational programs alongside the [Department of Educational Studies](#) of the University of Ghent to increase awareness of risks in privacy and security among users. Lastly, legal matters concerned with privacy are addressed. Together with the [Interdisciplinary Centre for Law and ICT](#) of the KU Leuven, SPION searches for suitable answers to questions such as "Which legal frameworks apply to SNS?" and "What are SNS' liabilities?" in order to reduce the responsibilities that increasingly and subtly have been allocated to individual users.

Gürses' talk at [Unlike Us #2](#) has certainly given the audience grounds for continuing to follow the pioneering efforts of the researchers and engineers of SPION and partners in issues of privacy and security.

Caroline Nevejan Talks about Being and Bearing Witness in Communities

Posted: March 9, 2012 at 5:30 pm | By: Catalina Iorga | Tags: [bearing witness](#), [being here](#), [caroline nevejan](#), [communities](#), [design](#), [participatory systems](#), [presence](#), [systems](#), [trust](#), [witness](#)



Caroline Nevejan (pictured right), the last speaker of the Unlike Us #2's first day, closed the *Private in the Public* session with conceptual yet straightforward presentation on designing participatory systems, as well as trust and presence within such systems. Nevejan focused mostly on the **Participatory Systems** initiative at TU Delft, where she works as a researcher. This eclectic initiative brings together researchers, artists and practitioners, who acknowledge the need for a new design paradigm in our contemporary networked society.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Caroline Nevejan's presentation)

This paradigm for socio-technical ecological systems that enable and support participation works by three design principles: (1) design for trust (social acceptance, transparency and security), (2) design for autonomy (empowerment, self-management and self-regulation), and (3) design for human-system interaction (engagement and collaboration).

Starting from the premise that we are not just psychological beings, but also social ones, Nevejan posed several questions that resonated throughout her talk: How can we accept responsibility in this complex environment? How do we become part of larger bodies? How do we trust things? How do we create privacy?

She then explained how the design principles of the **Participatory Systems** initiative were applied to notions of future energy and food markets. Nevejan claimed that social networks and infrastructures will merge into one big layer and that massive social media platforms such as Facebook are just playgrounds prepping us for what comes next. The energy and food markets of the future might look something like this: people will start making their own panels, delivering part of the energy they harvest to power plants, but trading with each other. In this context, it would be useful if people had personal software agents to represent and negotiate for them. The agents will then start communicating and collaborating with each other, merging into organisations and acquiring autonomy.

To ensure privacy in massive participatory systems that reunite physical layers with software architectures means to focus on carefully delineating agency. A solution for designing this kind of system was already given by economists such as Nobel prize winner Elinor Ostrom, whose work argues that polycentricity – self-organization at lower levels – is the key to a viable global financial system.

Nevejan then emphasized two crucial elements of these systems, presence and trust, and again asked herself how it is possible to design for them. The answer lies in understanding that they are trade-offs, with individuals adjusting to each other's levels of presence and trust on a continuous basis.

The **Participatory Systems** initiative has come up with a model called the **YUTPA framework**, which stands for being with **you** in unity of **time**, **place** and **action** – this also happens to be one of Aristotle's old sayings. Nevejan underlined that this four-dimension model was not imposed top-down on social reality, but emerged bottom-up from the collective efforts and shared experience of researchers, artists and practitioners. When it comes to **place**, she did not refer to just physical locations,

but also emotional space both on and offline, and the affordances of such a space. **Situated agency**: what you can and cannot do, is what matters in a place.

All these four dimensions are measurable and offer the possibility of identifying what role each of them play in different trade-off scenarios and complex social environments of the everyday.

Written by *Catalina Iorga*

Ganaele Langlois Speaks about Language and Meaning in Software

Posted: March 10, 2012 at 11:00 am | By: Catalina Iorga | Tags: [bernard stiegler](#), [bifo berardi](#), [cognitive capitalism](#), [ganaele langlois](#), [language](#), [making sense](#), [meaning](#), [pharmacology of attention](#), [social technologies](#), [software](#), [software matters](#), [subjectivation](#), [UnlikeUs](#)



Software Matters, the first session of the second day of [Unlike Us #2](#), was introduced and chaired by Korinna Patelis, who underlined that software can be read and interpreted as a text, which has extraordinary implications for social media analysis. Users of social media read this text over and over again on a daily basis, while scholars debate whether reading should stop at the interface or continue deep into the intricacies of code. [Ganaele Langlois](#) (pictured right) presented her work-in-progress on **language** and meaning-making in **software**, based on a theoretical framework that combines the perspectives of Italian autonomists and Bernard Stiegler's pharmacology.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Ganaele Langlois' presentation)

Interested in sites of encounter between software and users, Langlois talked about language as interface, as a tool of meaning-making. She focused on the conditions, consequences and effects of meaning-making along a human-software continuum. Meaning can be created by human actors who input all types of text (or content), through the collaboration of software and human users or entirely by software and algorithmic processes, such as Amazon's recommendation system.

The central question that guided her presentation was: *What happens to language and meaning-making in commercial social media such as Facebook?* To answer it, she drew on autonomist perspectives of immaterial labour and examined language as a form of capitalist investment, as a new way to sell commodities using emotion and affect. Her frame of thought was inspired by a remark made by Matteo Pasquinelli, who recently described language as a means of production at the center of contemporary economy.

Langlois identified three stages of **meaning-making**, namely **signification**, **subjectivation** and **making sense**.

Signification, to her mind, is not the traditional notion of Saussure, but a problematic concept that has been highly impacted by technology. In the line of Guattari, Langlois looked at signification in terms of social roles in cultural contexts and the modes of material expression that are available.

Applying **signification** to software, the first example mentioned by Langlois is the average online recommendation system, which operates like this: there's a set of data (material layer), generated and ordered by algorithmic processes (the set of rules that governs the material layer) and a cultural contexts in which the system functions (the articulation of the rules). Amazon's rec system, for instance, could be infinite as, if one buys something, one can receive more and more recommendations.

As for what happens on social media platforms, meaning is less important than meaningfulness. Langlois took the audience back to when Gmail was first launched and touted as the first free email service, which contained a piece of software that "reads" the content of a user's emails and produces targeted advertising. An outcry about invasion of privacy followed, but Google said that there's no need to worry about that since software does not care about what you say; software is not a human agent, it just needs information.

Meaning itself becomes less important than ranking huge amounts of information according to various cultural logics. Another example is the targeting of advertising on Facebook, which, unlike Amazon's expansion-oriented rec system, is based at looking at the network and closing in on certain particularities and preferences.

Langlois did not – due to time constraints and the complexity of the matter – devote the same attention to **subjectivation**, which she connected to psyche-capitalism that contains all processes of signification on social media platforms and deals with current conditions of existence and the possibility of predicting future ones.

She emphasized the need to move away from content and to follow the Guattarian logic of focusing on the collective assemblage of frames. That is, not on messages repeated over and over again, but on how they resonate. The repetition of messages socially positions us, as users and consumers, and ultimately incorporates certain messages into our beings, such as a catchy chorus.

Rushing to tie everything into the idea of making sense, Langlois concluded that

social media platforms are about creating conditions of existence formatted by commodification and cognitive capitalism. Feelings of panic paranoia and stress are bound to arise as users strive to actualize themselves in a capitalist framework that perpetuates a sense of lack.

Written by *Catalina Iorga*

David Berry Thinks Software

Posted: March 10, 2012 at 11:15 am | By: Catalina Iorga | Tags: [code](#), [cognitive maps](#), [David Berry](#), [ecology](#), [materiality](#), [ontotheology](#), [real-time stream](#), [software](#), [UnlikeUs](#), [web beacons](#), [web bugs](#)



David Berry, the second speaker of the *Software Matters* session at UnlikeUs #2 conference, took the audience on an informative journey into the ever-increasing scale and importance of **software**. Berry's talk aimed to provide a basic understanding of the role played by software in contemporary society, then to present ways of exploring and studying software, and finally, to give a substantive example of what kind of software we, as Web users, deal with on a daily basis: web bugs.

(Click [here](#) for the video of David Berry's presentation)

In a rather poetic and techno-deterministic fashion, Berry presented **software** as a giant piece of machinery whose wheels keep turning at night, while we sleep unaware that "networks of machines silently and repetitively exchange data". But this well-oiled system – which monitors, controls and assesses the world through electronic sensors, constantly calculating and recalculating, and producing reports, predictions and warning – needs billions of lines of code, continued maintenance and technical support to keep running smoothly. For instance, Boeing's 787 Dreamliner aircraft relies on 6.5 million lines of code to operate its avionics and onboard support system alone. But these technical behemoths operate on much larger levels than an aircraft, Berry pointed out, as they **control and organize networks** that permeate all levels of our society, be they areas such as finance, telecommunications, roads, food, energy, defence, law or government.

Having established the scale of software and its penetration scope, Berry proceeded to conceptualize software as something that enables the delegation of mental processes of high sophistication into computational systems, which instills a greater degree of agency into the technical devices than mechanical systems. Berry emphasized that **networked software** encourages a communicative environment of feedback mechanisms tying human and non-human actors together into new assemblages. These undertake impressive calculative feats, mobilising and developing ideas at a much bigger intensity in a **real-time stream**, which feeds information to us and *through* us.

As there is a greater use of embedded and quasi-visible technologies, Berry tried to bring software back into visibility and by developing ‘**cognitive maps**’ (Jameson, 1990). This would entail a concerted theoretical and empirical effort to pull software out of its hiding place. It’s not just us, as ordinary users or media theorists, who want to know more things about software; it also tries to understand as much as it can about us, both quantitatively, through dataflows, times and dates, prices, purchases and preferences, and qualitatively, as platforms like Facebook ask us to express our feelings and share our experiences (for instance, Facebook always asks “What’s on your mind?”)

The big question remained: **how to think software?** Berry offered two possibilities: one, as a super-medium materialised into particular code based devices – a framework that encourages questions of regulation in terms of media and communication policy – and two, **software and code as ontotheology**. In the latter, software acts as a translucent interface to the world, but also as opaque machinery that mediates engagement. Software can be seen as an **ecology**, made possible by a plethora of computational devices, with two faces: **commodity** (via the interface / surface, providing relative stability for consumption of ends) and **mechanism** (a means, a substructure for the overlay of commodities and consumption). To read this complex ecology, Berry advises, it would be wise to pay particular attention to the affordances of code: what it simultaneously enables and constricts.

An eloquent example of the web software spins around us comes in the form of ‘**web bugs**’ (or ‘web beacons’). These bugs, such as Facebook’s ‘Like’ button, consist of code embedded in seemingly benign surfaces, but that actively and covertly collects data about users. Berry understands beacons as **compactants** (computational actants), designed to passively-aggressively record data. **Compactants** are passive under the surface, but aggressive in gathering behavioral signals and affective streams.

For an example of how to track compactants, I suggest checking out the work of Anne Helmond and Caroline Gerlitz, briefly illustrated in this [blog post](#), *Visualizing Facebook’s Alternative Fabric of the Web*.

Written by [Catalina Iorga](#)

Anne Helmond and Carolin Gerlitz Explain the Like Economy

Posted: March 10, 2012 at 11:30 am | By: lisavanpappelendam | Tags: [Anne](#), [Anne Helmond](#), [Carolin](#), [Carolin Gerlitz](#), [decentralization](#), [digital methods](#), [facebook](#),

Gerlitz, Helmond, Hit Economy, Like Economy, participation, privacy, recommendation devices, search engine, social buttons, trackers, UnlikeUs#2, walled garden | 2 Comments



Session #4 *Software Matters* on the second day of [Unlike Us #2](#) gives the floor to **Anne Helmond** (pictured right) and **Carolin Gerlitz** (pictured below). They read from their paper “Reworking the Fabric of the Web: The Like Economy”, which focuses on medium specific qualities that organize value and rework the fabric of the web. Facebook, for instance, has expanded over its platform’s boundaries and Helmond and Gerlitz give the audience examples of how this development was enabled, such as social buttons, open graphs and new possibilities for developing apps. But what then are the consequences of this development?

(Click [here](#) for the video of Anne Helmond’s and Carloin Gerlitz’ presentation)

A new infrastructure comes to life, in which both decentralized and recentralized data flows and production exist. Facebook can no longer be considered as a [walled garden](#), but rather as a multi-layered and invisible fabric of the Web. Helmond and Gerlitz clarify their statement by showing how an infrastructure of instant and invisible participation of users comes into being through new devices and actors that go beyond regular relationship markers such as the hyperlink.

To start off their discussion of the Like Economy, a recap of the history of relationship markers is provided. In the early days, there was **the Hit Economy**. Information was linked through hits. Every hit and click represented a visitor of a particular web site and revenue was generated through banners. To increase traffic and value, webmasters would buy their way into the listings of search engines. In the late 1990’s, Helmond and Gerlitz carefully explain, Google introduced the hyperlink as the new value determination mechanism. Via the link analysis algorithm Google [PageRank](#), the quality and quantity of links is weighed and indicates the rise of **the Link Economy**. In the Link Economy, inlinks became objects of exchange. They lost their former function as central relationship markers and could now be traded and sold.

Helmond and Gerlitz go on to point out that with the emergence of the Social Web,

connections were massively made between people and between people and web objects. Digital devices such as **social buttons** (for instance via [Digg](#) and [Reddit](#)) are developed. The most prominent is perhaps the “Like” button. In February 2009, Facebook introduced this feature within its own platform. However, from 2010 onwards, the open graph allows the extension of Facebook’s internal graph to the external web and multiple platforms. Webmasters are now able to integrate Facebook features (for instance, the “Like” button) onto their own web sites. The production, distribution and consumption of online content, thus, transform into a social activity as well as a value producing activity. **The Like Economy** is born.

To move their arguments into the realm of Facebook’s **decentralization and recentralization of data flows**, Helmond and Gerlitz note how more than 7 million apps have already been integrated onto the Facebook platform and how there are approximately 200 billion posts each day, which are liked, shared or sent as Private Message via the external web as well as via Facebook itself. These are massive numbers and should be kept in mind when attempting to grasp the sense of reworkings of the fabric of the Web.



The aforementioned comments point to the decentralization of Facebook’s content flows. However, the recentralization is shaped through Facebook’s walled garden, as a very controlled data exchange. Here, data flows are centrally selected to contain demographics of Facebook users, after a decentralization of actors of value-creation has taken place. Helmond and Gerlitz portray the present-day tendencies to both facilitate platforms for information evaluation by users and recentralize the content flows back to Facebook.

Referring to an earlier talk on tracing and targeting internet users, Helmond and Gerlitz, too, draw attention to the persistent, and therefore highly interesting, role that **Facebook cookies** play. Via [Facebook Connect](#), the cookie is placed on the user’s machine, even if the individual does not actively use the “Like” button. Facebook still manages to retrieve data on the individual user and their user activity. Additionally, the cookie does not merely trace Facebook users but also non-Facebook users, because the cookie is connected to an IP address not to one person’s identity.

How can we track these **trackers** such as Facebook, Twitter and Google? A

pressing question that Helmond and Gerlitz are all too willing to answer. These researchers themselves employ digital tools and methods, such as [Ghostery](#), widgets, social plugins and Facebook Connect. The screen behind Helmond and Gerlitz continues to fill with impressive, eye-opening visualizations of the beacons, analytics and trackers, for web sites on the [Alexa](#) Top 1000 list, that they have so far been able to map. The maps make it all too clear that clusters of trackers emerge around the key players, including Facebook. Operating in the back-end, they form the alternative fabric of the Web.

Next on their agenda for today is the issue of **multiplication of data**. It enlarges engagement and numbering entails an extensification of responses. As Helmond and Gerlitz remark: “The “Like” is always a collective. It is more than +1.” They pursue their argument through an explication of the enormity with which entities such as recommendation devices have joined forces with Facebook and how these initiatives have broadened the horizon of possibilities in data production. The **recommendation culture** and relational database (Facebook’s back-end) equal the rebuilding of user profiles. Data clusters are aggregated through algorithmic processing. Or better yet, everyday lives are (becoming) parts of databases.

A second implication of the Like Economy that Helmond and Gerlitz wish to address is the fact that the relevant type of **participation** does not rely on activity but on a certain level of passivity. Opting out from the outside is difficult to achieve. Therefore, users need to adhere to the call for action and opt out from the inside. This situation also holds that users should activate blocking devices to visibly protect their own privacy and possibly disconnect from recommendation devices. Users should be able to actively choose whether to partake in or distance themselves from the Like Economy.

Helmond and Gerlitz conclude their clear and concise talk with a summary of their arguments and call for more (user) activity within the emerging fabric of the Web. The Like Economy needs a wider set of actors, more diversity and more openness to facilitate the necessary disruptions from the inside.

Harry Halpin on the Hidden History of the “Like” Button

Posted: March 10, 2012 at 12:30 pm | By: ryanneturenhout | Tags: [facebook](#), [Harry Halpin](#), [like button](#), [open standards](#), [RDF](#), [Resource Description Framework](#), [semantic web](#), [Tim Berners-Lee](#), [W3C](#), [walled garden](#), [WWW](#) | 1 Comment



On the first panel, *Software Matters*, of the last day of UnlikeUs #2, [Harry Halpin](#) (pictured right) gave a passionate talk about the hidden history of the “Like” button. This history intriguingly ties together the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), the Semantic Web, Brad Fitzpatrick, David Recordon, Facebook joining the W3C, and the relationship between open standards and “walled gardens”. Halpin began with a short history of the W3C, which was founded by Tim Berners-Lee, who wrote the original specification of the World Wide Web. He explained the role of the W3C

as a sort of United Nations, but centered around the thought that it would be great if, for instance, HTML and open standards could be used by all these different companies (Microsoft, Apple, Google and so forth) without their need to constantly sue each other.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Harry Halpin's presentation)

The Rise of Facebook He continued by explaining the history of the World Wide Web and that it could have died a couple of times during "the browser wars", which eventually ceased. When Facebook was becoming big in the mid-2000s, the W3C initially thought that this platform would just fade away, like most Social Networking Sites (SNS) do. At that point, some magazines were proclaiming "the death of the Web" and Facebook as the future. But the W3C had a plan: to get Facebook to join the W3C and to open up. At this time, the W3C was trying to define what the social Web actually was. As Halpin explained, from the very beginning, the World Wide Web did not aim to connect documents through hyperlinks, but to bring together people and places from the offline world.

A wake-up call and the beginning of the Semantic Web In 2005, the real wake-up call came when Orkut was shut down in Iran, making it loud and clear that data on SNS could be taken away from users in the blink of an eye. After this shutdown came a real breakthrough with regards to the Semantic Web. The solution, according to the hacker and open-source community, was to build a portable social network. At this time, Dan Brickle was creating an open standard for specifying a social network, using the Resource Description Framework (RDF). The W3C and RDF wanted to encode a Web for databases, where everything should be like the general Web, but with subjects, properties and values, a "Web of data": the Semantic Web.

Thoughts for the Social Graph – A manifesto Harry Halpin went on to detail the further development of this idea. Brad Fitzpatrick and David Recordon played a significant role in this development, as they thought that social data was too important to be monopolized by any social networking site. They released their ideas in a manifesto called "[Thoughts for the Social Graph](#)", which stated that the social graph should be a community asset. Their idea was that data should be shared between people using non-profit, open-source software. The login data of users should remain under their own control and the social graph should be portable and exportable. David Recordon, co-author of this manifesto, was at that time working on the concept of the decentralized Open Graph and he was later recruited by Facebook.

Facebook joining W3C The people at W3C thought: "This is great!" If Facebook hires someone like David Recordon, maybe Facebook is going to open up. Recordon said to the W3C that Facebook was very interested in joining the W3C, an announcement that came with lots of expectations from Facebook, which the site never met. For instance, W3C did not expect Facebook to be so invested in the Semantic Web, which was back then considered an idealistic vision. Facebook eventually joined the W3C, a decision that was welcomed under the impression that

it would lead to the opening up of the platform's Social Graph.

The launch of the Like button What happened next was nothing short of ironic: Facebook launched their Like Button, which was called the Open Graph Protocol even though it is not open nor a protocol. The Like button uses RDF (an open framework used by the Semantic Web), which connects different data, and combines it with the complete opposite: the data of 'who likes what' is completely controlled by and closed within Facebook. When someone clicks on a Like button, the Javascript looks at the Semantic Web part of the page and ships it back to Facebook, back into the 'walled garden'. What we can see here, Halpin stated, is that Facebook deployed open standards to build a closed giant global graph, an accumulation of data about people and products.

Personal data is the new oil of the world economy (Alex 'Sandy' Pentland) What is happening here is much larger than this, Halpin concluded, since we can now see that personal data is a sought after commodity in a world still in deep economic crisis. Facebook is accumulating the life-world itself and personal data will likely be traded on markets, a direction most Web 2.0 platforms are moving into. Halpin expressed his concern and finally called for a socio-economic and political debate about the crucial issue of personal data becoming the ultimate economic motor.

Written by [Ryanne Turenhout](#), MA student New Media & Digital Culture

Pitfalls of Building Social Media Alternatives (Debate)

Posted: March 10, 2012 at 1:30 pm | By: Nicola Bozzi | Tags: [briar](#), [crabgrass](#), [freedombox](#), [lorea](#), [secushare](#), [social swarm](#)

This panel session was pretty intense, as was the following debate. Below an overview of each presentation.



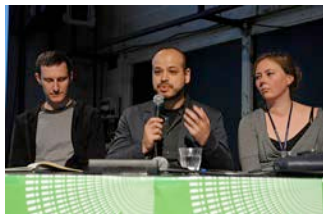
Elijah Sparrow's speech was focused on presenting the [Crabgrass](#) platform, a social network for activist groups currently in an early alpha phase, but nonetheless serving some 30.000 users already. Theoretically based on a very specific idea of networking (decentralized, supporting labor-sharing and alternative economies), Crabgrass is a software libre that provides tools specifically designed for the needs of groups, rather than individuals. Sparrow defines the 10-people staff running the service as "organization-obsessed anarchists", working on a combination of paid and unpaid labor and relying mostly on small private donations.

(Click [here](#) for the video of this debate)

Spanish information activist **Spideralex** focused her presentation on the problems a decentralized collaborative project such as **Lorea** (a “hotbed of social networks” and a community of some 50.000 members) has to face. Not only did she discuss the technical and financial difficulties which many speakers pointed out, she also stressed the need for a stronger grip of developers on the desires of their user base, rather than protocols alone. Since what her team is interested in is sustainability models and not business models, illegal, unprofitable, and controversial solutions are often on the right track.



James Vasile's presentation was centered on the **Freedombox**, a modem-like box that “decentralizes information.” Namely, the tool takes care of a series of issues the average user cannot really manage: privacy, security, anonymity, and so on. By using freely accessible open-source software, Freedombox encrypts messages and browsing, blocks ads, rejects cookies, manages social keys and provides tools for file sharing and so on. The box provides a standardized infrastructure and a simple interface for tricky matters like encryption, but its makers are not going to be the ones selling it. As a non-profit organization of social integrators, like Vasile defined his team, they are basically making a prototype available for other people to build a market on.



Michael Rogers was very theoretical, breaking down the foundations behind the **Briar** project, a “secure news and discussion platform that will enable journalists, activists and civil society groups in authoritarian countries to communicate without fear of government interference.” The Briar software will allow people to establish communication networks on a wide range of media (not only internet, but BlueTooth, WiFi and USB sticks) in a secure way. One of the main points in Rogers’ speech was that lack of privacy and the subsequent paranoia can lead to retreat from political action, which needs a certain level of anonymity in order to fully express its potential. Instead of a social network based on individualist narcissism, Rogers and his partners argue for a more relational identity, making the best of networks as collective entities.

Carlo v.Loesch (lynX) gave the most technical presentation of all. His project, **Secushare**, is a framework for a social network that uses encryption in order to keep information private and distributed, while still relying on servers for efficiency. He stressed the importance of servers in the imbalanced relationship between users and providers, and announced that he has brought a proposal about server-based privacy to the Pirate Party in Germany.



After a short introduction of [Social Swarm](#), a German project also focused on decentralized social networks, with relative Wiki and call to collaboration, the actual debate began. Several people from the audience intervened, many of which concerned with issues of financial sustainability. At the question: “Who’s going to pay the developers?”, James Vasile said his foundation will only act as a mediator in terms of services. Perhaps Elijah Sparrow best expressed the concept with another question: “Can the Internet become civilized?”, to which he sort of replied himself later: “There’s no free lunch on the internet, people on the long run are gonna have to pay for what they use.” Another conversation-maker was Harry Halpin’s provocation: “Why not making one working alternative to Facebook, instead of 30 non-working ones?”. Some speakers replied that people want to choose and difference is healthy, while Carlo v.Loesch ironically remarked that “maybe our collective intelligence is not that intelligent yet.”

Philipp Budka on Indigenous Cyberactivism

Posted: March 10, 2012 at 3:45 pm | By: ryanneturehout | Tags: [Canada](#), [cultural activism](#), [cyberactivism](#), [indigenous people](#), [KOKnet](#), [media technology diversity](#), [MyKnet](#), [Philipp Budka](#)



On the last panel of the last day of UnlikeUs #2, *Social Media Activism and the Critique of Liberation Technology*, [Philipp Budka](#) covered indigenous cyber activism through the case studies of [K-Net](#) and [MyKnet.org](#) in northwestern Ontario, Canada. He maintained that media technology diversity reflects cultural diversity through activist projects and practices. In building his argument, Budka offered a definition and typology of cyberactivism, after which he explored indigenous cyberactivism and what initiatives of this kind look like.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Philipp Budka’s presentation)

Defining cyberactivism There is no single definition of cyberactivism, just as there is not just one form of offline activism. What all types of cyberactivism have in common though, is that they all concentrate on socio-political and cultural change. A three-fold typology proposed by Vegh (2003) categorizes activism into: (1) awareness and advocacy, organising and carrying out actions, (2) organisation and mobilisation, which is a call for action, and (3) action-reaction, which can also be called *hacktivism*. Budka stated that there is a need for more historically informed and contextualized research in this area given that in distinct media ecologies and economies, activism and its use of social and digital media does not mean the same thing to everybody.

Indigenous cyber activism, outreach and inreach initiatives There are currently about 500 million people that define themselves as indigenous, different cultural groups and different languages. They are a very powerful but dispersed group of people who are early ICT adapters. The reason for adapting ICT is to improve the political, sociocultural and economic situation. Within indigenous cyberactivism two categories can be distinguished (Landzelius 2006). The first one is called outreach initiatives or activities and the other one is called inreach initiatives. Budka went on to give two examples of these initiatives both established in 1994. The first one is Zapatistas in Mexico which is an outreach initiative established to create a place to discuss ideas and establish a counter-public that would put pressure on the government and has led to political negotiations. An example of an inreach initiative is KOKnet, it was established to create an ICT infrastructure for the indigenous people in Ontario, Canada.

KOKnet and MyKnet.org, examples of indigenous activism Budka further explored this example of KOKnet, which is short for Keewaytinook Okimakanak's Kuhkenah Network. The overall objective of this initiative was to connect First Nation people and communities, the remote and isolated groups. The project started out with a bulletin board but has grown into broadband and satellite internet infrastructure within the last 15 years. The agenda of this initiative is to keep the people in the community, to use the technology that they usually find only outside of the community.

Within KOKnet one service has become especially popular and that is MyKnet.org a platform on which the indigenous people can create their own personal homepages. At the moment they have around 30.000 active accounts. Budka explain that people are become active producers of their own homepage on which they create representations of their local daily lives. With MyKnet.org the indigenous people are also learning to write, code, design and discuss.

MyKnet in the age of Facebook Budka held a survey in 2011 and found that Facebook is the only Social Networking Site that next to MyKnet.org is being used within this community. He observed a shift from people connecting on MyKnet.org to people using Facebook to connect with family members. Nevertheless, MyKnet.org is still being used. Several factors come into play here, on MyKnet.org there is a sense of belonging, it was established especially for those people and that cannot be said about Facebook. Furthermore, it is still used because you can design your own page and have ownership and control over what you put on your homepage.

Cyberactivism = cultural activism Budka concluded with stating that MyKnet is a good example of how ownership and control can keep people using media technologies. It shows that there is a need for supporting local languages, cultural heritage and cultural practices. This is done through control and ownership on one hand, but also through cooperation, networking and sharing. In this way, cyberactivism can also be seen as a form of cultural activism.

Written by *Ryanne Turenhout, MA student New Media & Digital Culture*

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Stefania Milan on Cloud Protesting

Posted: March 10, 2012 at 4:00 pm | By: orsolyagulyas | Tags: [activism](#), [cloud protesting](#), [participation](#), [social media](#), [social movements](#), [social technologies](#), [stefania milan](#), [surveillance](#), [UnlikeUs](#)



The very last session of [Unlike Us #2](#), *Social Media Activism and the Critique of Liberation Technology*, was a culmination of what was in the air from the beginning of the conference. As Oliver Leistert has posed in his introduction to the session, the question is how does social media change activism, how does it change relations between protesters and influence larger power structures in a way that re-configure our understanding of protest as such? [Stefania Milan](#), coming from sociological

background, is aiming to answer exactly that with her latest research.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Stefania Milan's presentation)

The audience got a first glimpse of her still-in-progress work on what she calls **cloud protesting**. The term may seem controversial in the sense that it implies a centralized, corporate structure but in fact points to the decentralized nature of contemporary protests. Through the notion of cloud protesting she understands social media not merely as a tool for, but also as a metaphor and enabler of today's new forms of protesting and activism.

She sees collective action as intrinsically communicative and expressive, therefore social media is especially apt for enabling such dynamics. But why call it cloud protesting? First of all, cloud is understood as a metaphor for a network but it also signifies an **online space where resources are stored**. These are 'soft' resources, meaning they are immaterial and unstable, that provide a possibility for civic engagement and mobilization to take place. They are the 'ingredients' for building today's social movements creating collective identities, mobilizing frames, narratives, know-how and expertise (e.g. how to set up a camp or live stream events). These 'ingredients' co-exist in this space, which gives them shape and presence in a body: tweets, links, photographs or videos are all embodiments that don't exist in that specific form outside of cyberspace, she explained. The cloud is attractive to many because it gives **access** and resources to everyone with an internet connection. Also, it gives participants the possibility to select and highlight their preferred meanings, to **customize their participation** instead of having to 'buy' pre-packaged ideas selected by others.

What does this mean in relation to collective action dynamics? Milan pointed out two main consequences of the cloud: the changes it brings to **organizational patterns** and to **identity building processes**. She gave an account of different phases in the history of protests, how in the 60's social movements were characterized by strong leadership and a strong sense of belonging to a group. With the rise of the internet in the 90's, transnational movements with more flexible identities became possible, although these were still very much centralized and group identification was still present. Today however, social media is changing all of this. In this networked individual space, most of **the nodes are in fact individuals**, not groups. The fact that the costs of protesting are reduced with social media makes individual participation easy. Self-expression is now becoming a core aspect of protesting and this individualization is a rejection of the non-negotiable ideologies that used to characterize social movements. There is no need for centralized control any more over the collective narrative of the protest because **the cloud collectively determines what fits the movement**. In this way, Milan pointed out that the cloud (social media) becomes the group, providing a sense of belonging, but it also gives a lesser sense of responsibilities and the feeling of having **no strings attached**. In cloud protesting, identity building processes also change. Everyone takes part in the collective identity building by posting pictures or videos, blogging, tweeting. In short, the politics of identity becomes the politics of **visibility**.

In sum, Milan gave a couple of important aspects of why social media platforms are changing the practices of protest. They allow for a **multiplication of values**, they are

based on **everyday technologies** that require no knowledge of their infrastructure (which can be a risk too) and the cloud has the power to influence the **tactics** of activists. Most importantly though, it enables the formation of **customized narratives** while at the same time it makes **collective identity** possible. It can provide a meaning to collective action that everyone can identify with.

In the end of her presentation, Stefania Milan brought in the idea of surveillance, or rather, **auto-surveillance** to cloud protesting. As pictures of protests appear online, surveillance can be outsourced by asking people to identify individuals in them. Oftentimes, it is the group itself that is asking for the identification of its own members, and frames this as something that is in the interest of the movement. She sees this as one of the most controversial aspects of contemporary social movements and finished her talk with pointing out the need to think about what we consider acceptable practice in today's social movements and what exactly are the boundaries of such movements. The general agreement seems to be that social media is empowering movements but Milan revealed some aspects that also point out **risks** that arise under the new conditions of cloud protesting.

Written by Orsolya Gulyás

Max Schrems talks about Europe versus Facebook: our way or Mark's way?

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Max Schrems, an Austrian law student and founder of the [Europe versus Facebook](#) group, took the stage in the last session of *Unlike Us #2 – Social Media Activism and the Critique of Liberation Technology* – and told his audience about his ongoing battle for privacy with the social networking giant Facebook. It all started with him asking Facebook for all the personal data it stored relating to his Facebook account, exercising his right to access as laid down in European data protection law.

After going through the more than 1200 pages long PDF document he got on a CD, Schrems started wondering why Facebook had data about him that by European law it shouldn't have and what could be done about this.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Max Schrems's presentation) He found that users from Europe enter a legal contract with Facebook Ireland Ltd., the European branch of the company, when creating an account on the site. Therefore, his group filed [22 complaints](#) in Ireland against Facebook, trying to find out who is actually **responsible** for what happens on Facebook; who is the **controller** of data processing. Facebook's reply to was somewhat dubious, first referring to internal communication problems and then claiming they were 'the controller for what they control' and that users have responsibilities too. But in fact, as Schrems said, it seems like Facebook's approach is to control everything that happens on the page. In this way, **the company doesn't comply with European laws.**

Their business model is based on users providing all the content, and in turn the company gets to use and control all that data. The idea is that Facebook functions more or less like a blog, but they analyze all the uploaded content in the background, taking information from and about its users. Facebook justifies these actions by saying that users in fact gave their **consent** to all of this when signing up to the site.

In his presentation, Schrems shared some of the complaints they filed against the company. Among the **data that Facebook stored** about him, he could find categories like the user's last location and IP address. This data was not only collected based on direct interaction with the site, but also based on the data retrieved from pictures that are uploaded to the site from phones. As Schrems explained, the problem is not necessarily that this data gets collected by Facebook but more the fact that users don't know about it. Besides the lack of **transparency**, he also mentioned that the PDF document did not contain any data about his 'likes'. Another alarming concern of his was that when users delete something from their profiles, it never actually got deleted and still stays on Facebook's servers by being placed in a folder for removed data – even our deleted pokes are kept. When questioned about this, the company tried to defend its practice by claiming that this 'deleted' data can help track down cases of cyberbullying, in the case of pokes. The group is also campaigning for making it possible for users to **opt-in, rather than opt-out** of pre-configured settings.

As far as users' consent goes, Schrems pointed out that Facebook's **Privacy Policy** and **Statement of Rights and Responsibilities** documents are altogether more than 200 pages long. In spite of the length, the company never states what they do with our data, even if under European law corporations state that they have to be very clear on those terms and provide detailed explanations. The act of consent should also be an **active decision** users take, for which a checkbox could be implemented. Facebook however clearly has no intentions to bring these matters to its users' attention. Schrems talked more about the fact that in many cases Facebook doesn't just collect data on its users but on non-users too, in this way creating what he called '**shadow profiles**'. Applications we use can oftentimes take our friends' data too, in this way setting up a situation where consent can come from a **third party**. This is also against the law in Europe and made Schrems and his group wonder what this excessive data collection meant? Why would Facebook need all this data just for some friend suggestions and a few targeted ads?

In order to answer these questions, the **Europe versus Facebook** group is pressing hard on Irish legal agencies. In a lively Q&A session after Schrems' talk, he revealed that Irish authorities don't seem to want to **enforce** the existing data protection laws very much, and the fact that Facebook is creating jobs in the country could be one of the reasons for that. The next move the group is planning is to continue with their complaints in the Irish court system and also to start a lawsuit against the Republic of Ireland for not enforcing data protection laws. To reach their goals in making Facebook more transparent and respectful towards user privacy might still be a long way to go. The fact is that a lot of **lobbying** is going on from tech companies like Facebook, setting up offices for their people in Brussels. There is also hope though, since after their complaints Facebook did make changes in their privacy policy, supposedly the biggest ones they ever had to make. However, by talking with the Facebook policy team it often turns out that the company knows that their actions aren't exactly according to the law and the legal experts at Facebook push hard to fix that. Unfortunately, the answer they often get from the upper management teams is: 'Mark doesn't want it that way'. The Europe versus Facebook legal battle goes on...

Written by Orsolya Gulyás

Eleanor Saitta: Networks and Nation States

Posted: March 10, 2012 at 5:30 pm | By: Nicola Bozzi | Tags: [briar](#), [constitutional analysis support team](#), [eleanor saitta](#), [politics](#), [sukey](#), [ushahidi](#)



Hacker, artist and writer [Eleanor Saitta](#) started her presentation by tracing quite a bleak scenario of the current global situation. As overpopulation and global warming expose the limits of the human presence on Earth, financial capitalism appropriates sociality, under the disguise of normal companies like Facebook. States try and keep their controlling position, while at the same time adjusting to the world-wide flows that transcend them, thus paving the way for a “preventable geocide.”

As a designer and an activist, Saitta is now currently working on two main projects in order to bridge the technical literacy that social media have spread across society with the political commitment it takes to try and turn things around.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Eleanor Saitta’s presentation)

The first is the [Constitutional Analysis Support Team](#) (CAST), founded in Iceland in 2010 and focused on providing technical assistance to governments that are willing to undertake a more crowd-sourcing oriented constitutional redesign. Taking Lawrence Lessig’s “code is law” one step further, de facto the organization is offering a de-bugging service for policy-makers, correcting internal inconsistencies and opening the state up to citizen interaction. If we still cannot talk about “crowd-sourcing law”, as Saitta pointed out, the idea is definitely to move in that direction. Behind the project is the conviction that, maintaining a neutral approach, it is possible for a third party to provide effective and somewhat exact guidance to a constitutional committee. Saitta admits human semiotics are not so easily computable, but she argues many other aspects of a set of laws (decidability, prioritization, undefined variables) can be dealt with just as systematically as code. Considering the governments the Team – which consists primarily of Saitta herself and Icelandic-Irish information activist Smári McCarthy – works with are facing the aftermath of a revolution or a dramatic change, definitely the group’s focus on consistency can be beneficial in terms of stability.

The second project the speaker mentioned is [Sukey](#), a network aimed at collecting ground reports on everyday instances of state control and mapping them, thanks to

an analysis team. First based on Google Maps, Sukey is now using [Ushahidi](#), while the second version will be built on top of [Briar](#). The web app comes in a particularly timely moment, especially if we consider the so-called “Twitter revolutions” have demonstrated that 1. the clutter of irrelevant information can confuse a protest and 2. it is relatively easy for the authorities to acquire information about protesters or pollute the cloud with propaganda. By relying on decentralized networks and maintaining a specialized focus on demonstrations, Sukey makes it way more practical and secure to communicate during certain situations.

If the first project is more tailored for an group of officials, encouraging a more bottom-up approach by institutionalization, the second is more of a resource for horizontally connected actors to organize, working as a leveraging tool to balance the information sharing possibilities of the authorities. What both try to do, though, is try and speed up communication in serious circumstances, optimizing efficiency.

If you are looking for more details on Saitta’s presentation, she uploaded both [her script](#) and [her slides](#) online.

Unlike Us #2: Interview with Jodi Dean

Posted: March 20, 2012 at 10:26 am | By: Michelle Oosthuyzen | Tags: [activism](#), [critique](#), [facebook](#), [individualism](#), [jodi dean](#), [Occupy](#), [SNS](#), [social media](#), [social networking sites](#), [Unlike Us #2](#)



After her inspiring view on society’s non-existence in relation to social media at the Unlike Us #2 conference on the 9th of March 2012, we got the chance to ask Jodi Dean some questions to further explore ‘the social’ and the existence of social media platforms in a capitalist society.

***(Michelle)* Is building alternatives in social media the right tool for criticizing and resisting dominant social media platforms and hence overcoming the capitalist power structures from which these platforms emerge.**

Not exactly correct because they are already in power relations. The point is that if we think about power distribution in concentrated networks; dispersion and centralization are two sides of the same coin. There are hubs and there is the long tail and more and more dispersion will also produce the figurative gap between the dispersed long tail and the one at the top. So this makes it easier to go to the thing that is more popular than it is to find the things that are less popular. I think that a lot of the mentality in building lots of alternatives participates in the dispersion and hence also concentration.

(Michelle) **Does this mean that the only resistance regarding these dominant social media platforms could emerge from within (Facebook in this case)?**

Well, some of the art projects don't want to be perceived as an alternative, they just want to make art and that's just fine. My point is not to say that this stuff is pointless. If your goal is a kind of politics than you got to be mindful of this. So yes, I actually think that resistance could come from within and that would be finding ways to cease the platforms that are big or remake the ones that are big. Or it would just be the case of a kind of ecosystem, just in the way that Facebook ended up triumphing for a while now over Myspace. In an ecosystem other things will emerge, but than again it is not something politically radical.

(Michelle) **Within capitalism, are there ways of thinking around social networking sites (SNS) as not taking away the power of the collective? How would this look like and could we see something like that emerge in the near future?**

First off all, how would it look like: it would not be privately owned. It wouldn't be for the benefit of Mark Zuckerberg and his herd of people. One way to think of that is that you would rather have something like a system where, once we recognize that everyone is producing communication and communicate downward, that everyone than is entitled to a social wage. That would be a way around it, so no private ownership but than a social wage because everybody makes these things. But to answer your question if there could be a social media platform under the current conditions that wouldn't take away from the power of the collective and benefit capitalism: no. The media that we have is designed to empower the rich and distract and disperse the poor. And that's what happens. These platforms support inequality.

(Serena) **Would this alternative platform perhaps be owned by the state government, like public transport?**

There are different critical mechanisms for people (online) to register their unhappiness or to research things about members of the parliament who are doing 'bad corrupt things' and this is particularly the case in the UK. Furthermore some of the people might also point to Wikileaks as an organization in the capitalist society that in some ways empower the people. But first Wikileaks is totally overshadowed by Assange. Here is why: dispersion. We focus on these 38.000 documents and we never look because who wants to look at 38.000 documents? So we say the number and that becomes 'the one': Assange and not the multiplicity of things because the multiplicity is too hard to grapple with. So that is why Assange / Wikileaks is not an alternative. And then the British government; I feel like recognizing the kinds of capitalist democracies that we have, that there are some ways of making some politicians accountable in minor cases. That's what we have already, that's not changing very much.

(Serena) **So maybe SNS should be owned by universities or education systems?**

Here is the thing: all of my students think that Twitter it to letting Lady Gaga

communicate with the fans. It's not about politics, or the public sphere. It's about Lady Gaga primarily. I hate to keep coming back to these power laws, but that's what it looks like on Twitter. Even when we have university settings it's very difficult for that to make much of an impact. It's enough for people to say: I took a class and we read some political stuff and blogged about it. It doesn't have a registration effect. If we think about the different political movements that have been going on for the last year and a half or so, that suggests that real change comes from on the streets and then uses media like anybody uses media; namely to organize, communicate and share. But it's not primarily a media thing, it primarily on the streets.

(Michelle) **To what extent would you say that users of social media are perhaps to easily seduced by the tactics of communicative capitalism, like free labor? How much responsibility do users have to protect themselves and their 'social'?**

We all do that; it's in our practices even though we know. It's fun and we like it. I think that asking for the responsibility of the individual user is the wrong question because it's an individualist question. Where the focus needs to be in this kind of question is: how are collectives coming to form themselves and become recognized by collectives. Somebody said in the comments this morning: What we don't yet have a good vocabulary for, are the kinds of groups and/or collectivities that are emerging on things like Facebook. And that is true. I'm becoming a little bit more self critical about potentials for media. I became more aware of how we can become more aware of ourselves as a collective and that is unfolding, its fragile and risky and we don't know yet how strong the collective is. In some way it may not be much more than Startrek fan groups but I noticed that the fact that there were at one time over a thousand Facebook pages for different Occupy groups: that started to have a wage for people in the movement. That made people think: hey this is now a movement that is happening. A part of it was that there was a common name that people share, common images and a common location to step on the streets.

(Michelle) **Is that than the centralized focus of the collective, the 'common'?**

My friends and I have been trying to figure this out. Jack Bratich for example wants to argue that Occupy is just a meme. I'm arguing with a couple of other different people, in different ways that you can't just think about Occupy as a meme or that that's the common point. It's got to be Occupy Wall street, its got to be the connection to the economic crisis and the direct targeting of Wall street as the problem. They do have a common image/name but what set things off is the real economic dimension. There is a common: the physical on the street at Wall street.

(Serena) **So a collective problem is what binds people, something you want to fight for together?**

You don't have a revolution without there first being something wrong. There's got to be a wrong or a crime for a revolution to get going. I would say that it can't be the case that things that happen primarily or exclusively online can be revolutions in any sense. This is a medium and other things are outside. We shouldn't confuse those two things, of course they are connected but it's not that you can just have it online.

Just because people deface a government's website, that doesn't bring down the government. Hacking for example has happened and that's cool. It's a kind of critical concept and then what you want it to do is to go a bit further and do something like erasing everyone's social security numbers or erasing everyone's debts. That would be something that would not just be mediated.

(Michelle) **Social media is not only about activism and the collective but it is also used as a platform to present ones self and creating personal identities. Isn't that more of an individual act? Where can we find the collective in that particular use of SNS?**

I think it's an illusion to say that identities are individual because you only feel a need to produce them within a certain context of other people. It's not been the case historically that people felt the immense need to construct an identity. It's a very contemporary thing and why is it a contemporary thing because we are under the conditions of neoliberal capital that tell us that you are in completely and alone responsible for your own life. It is you if you're not successful. This individualism that we have is driven, motivated and produced by capitalism.

(Michelle) **When people feel solely responsibility for their own life, do you think that it makes them feel extra guilty when they are not successful or happy (enough)?**

It's a kind of immense almost unbearable pressure. What needs to happen is that we need to recognize that strength and freedom come through collective engagements and not through individualism because you can't do it all.

It is very weird because social media is so individualistic, so individualized but you also have the other side. We start to get that it's more than that; it's the social surplus. So I think that since the Egyptian revolutions, I've noticed in my own media bubbles, much more of a kind of collective, political sense of people acting in a Facebook and Twitter setting very specifically with a kind of collective and political mindset. And I think that, especially in the United States, that has been missing on the left for a long time.

(Serena) **Do you think it's easier to connect with people with the same political mindset on social media like Twitter, in order to create a community?**

I think that the ease of use is there and that people are doing it also then has its own effect. Someone writes that blogs happen because people blog. So these social things happen because people are doing them, so it's a little bit of a reflexive circuit. That's not necessarily a bad thing. I don't think that it's a massive problem that people don't know how to use Twitter well. I think the problem is political will, organized political will.

By Serena Westra and Michelle Oosthuizen

What's the 'social' in social media? An introduction of Unlike Us #2 by Geert Lovink

Posted: March 27, 2012 at 12:27 pm | By: Michelle Oosthuyzen



Geert Lovink enthusiastically welcomed everyone at the second Unlike Us conference on the 9th of March 2012 in Trouw Amsterdam. He begins by successfully reminding us why there is reason for us to be critical and ambitious when it comes to understanding the workings of dominant social media platforms, which centralized structures are ruling the Internet and so many of our daily lives.

(Click [here](#) for the video of Geert Lovink's presentation)

The agenda for Unlike Us that was formulated in the summer of 2011 was large and ambitious, says Lovink, but so is the impact of social media on our society today. Although some issues regarding the private and the public and the question of identity and privacy seem exhausted, Lovink assures us that they aren't yet overcome and therefore will be part of the agenda. However the focus of the conference will also be for example on artistic responses and exploring the relation between politics and aesthetics. Furthermore, Lovink emphasises that Unlike Us also wants to give a voice to alternatives:

There is little known about the alternatives, but we think that it is good to have a public debate about our expectations and the premises of these alternatives. Are they really alternatives to these centralized dominant structures? And how do they deal with the tension between identity and sharing?

After his introduction of the issues that will be addressed during the sessions of the coming two days, Lovink gave us an insight into his newest essay that is partly dedicated to Eva Illouz, a sociologist from Egypt who unfortunately couldn't make it to the conference due to circumstances.

In this essay Lovink turns a critical eye towards the 'social' in social media and departs this quest from the seemingly contradictory notion of the disappearance of the social, as described by French sociologist Jean Baudrillard in 1985. "We need to be aware that this obliteration of the social has downgraded the importance of social theory within critical debate and has reduced its intellectual range to a close circle of experts."

Lovink questions himself if the rise of social media, as the topic of this conference, will induce a renaissance of sociology. Nevertheless one thing is certain; we are in need of general theory on the design of society and sociology should free itself from, what Lovink beautifully calls "their professional impulse", which is the social implication of technology. We should strive for the "aufhebung" of dichotomies, Lovink continues, which constrain and limit our way of thinking, such as the distinction between real – virtual and public – private.

As Eva Illouz wrote:

If sociology has traditionally called on us to exert our scrutiny and vigilance in the art of making distinctions, the challenge that awaits us is to exercise the same vigilance in a social world that consistently defeats these distinctions.

Although Unlike Us tries to bring people together with a critical point of view, there is still no critical school in sight and according to Lovink people are still overwhelmed and in “hype mode” when it comes to social media. Lovink reminds us that social media are not aimed to revive the lost potential of the social as a mob, but instead the social is reanimated as a simulacrum of its own ability to create meaningful and lasting social relations. Furthermore he insists on looking at facebook beyond good and evil and invites us to take a step back in order to see what is actually going on, on these websites.

The term social has been shifted and neutralized time and again but the social is precisely what it pretends to be: a calculated opportunity in times of distributed communication.

Lovink ends with a call for critical analysis on the use and history of the term ‘social’ in relation to, for example, Silicon Valley and the debate about the architecture of the Internet, which would be an interesting starting point for research.

The essay What’s the Social in Social Media, will be available online soon.

Interview Peter Olsthoorn: De Macht van Facebook

Posted: March 28, 2012 at 10:48 am | By: Michelle Oosthuizen

Na *De Macht van Google* brengt internetjournalist en media expert Peter Olsthoorn nu ook de macht van Facebook voor de lezer in kaart. Dit interview gaat in op een aantal aspecten hiervan, waarbij het concept privacy in relatie tot social media centraal zal staan.



Kunt u iets vertellen over de verschillende onderwerpen die in het boek *De Macht van Facebook* aan bod komen?

Het boek behandelt verschillende vraagstukken en onderwerpen met betrekking tot Facebook, onderverdeeld in zes delen. Ten eerste de vraag: wat is de macht van Facebook en wat betekent dit voor privacy? Vanaf privacy wordt de sprong gemaakt naar marketing: hoe maakt marketing hier gebruik van. Een gedeelte van het boek is geweid aan terrorisme waar ik bijvoorbeeld inga op Anders Breivik en de aanslag die hij pleegde in Noorwegen. Daarnaast komen ook onderwerpen zoals doodgaan en verslaving aan bod en wordt er dus ingegaan op de maatschappelijke gevolgen van Facebook. Ten slotte komen filosofen, technici en schrijvers aan het woord over hun gedachten en meningen wat betreft Facebook.

Hoewel privacy wel centraal staat, is het zeker niet het enige onderwerp dat dit boek beslaat. Daarnaast draait het hier niet om modder gooien: Ik heb ervoor gewaakt om echt puur negatief te zijn over Facebook.

Vaak wordt er met de boze vinger naar Facebook gewezen als het gaat om bijvoorbeeld privacy. En terecht. Echter lijkt men voorbij te gaan aan de gebruikers rol als consument binnen dit machtsproces. Daarnaast heerst er vaak een ontwijkende en / of onverschillige houding als het aankomt op bijvoorbeeld privacy. Wat is uw kijk hierop?

Ooit noemde een vriendin van mij onverschilligheid de ergste eigenschap die er is in de wereld. Mensen kunnen onverschillig zijn maar je moet een mate van intelligentie bezitten om dat te willen en kunnen doorgronden en dan nog.. Als je je aangetrokken voelt tot dienst zoals social media dan neem je die reclame voor lief. Er worden enorme databases met informatie opgeslagen aan de hand waarvan profielen worden opgebouwd en verzameld. Je kunt natuurlijk zeggen: so be it. Ik vind ook dat je dat recht moet hebben en ik ben er niet om dat te veroordelen. In mijn boek voer ik natuurlijk voldoende argumenten aan waarom ik denk dat je er beter voorzichtig mee zou moeten zijn.

Aan de andere kant blijkt uit statistieken dat Nederlanders er wel voorzichtig mee zijn. Hoewel er in Januari 2012 het aantal Facebook gebruikers op 6 miljoen is gesteld, is de verbruikstijd op Facebook aanzienlijk minder dan in andere landen, dan het gemiddelde. Ook zie je dat steeds meer ouderen op Facebook zitten, wat logisch is want je kan zo makkelijk content zoals video delen. Facebook heeft enorme voordelen: het is gewoon geweldig. Het is veiliger dan het gewone internet, als in aanzienlijk minder phishing en virussen. Facebook is in feite een laag over het internet heen wat het een stuk makkelijker maakt. Bovenop dat web functioneert Facebook en Facebook functioneert helemaal volgens standaarden en lopen niet uit de pas. Ze houden zich ook actief bezig met standaardisatie dus ze willen meedoen met het bouwen van standaarden. Op zich is er met Facebook niet zoveel mis behalve de enorme dataverzameling want die is echt buitensporig.

Max Schrems bekend van Europe versus Facebook project kwam natuurlijk met het bewijs en heeft boven tafel gekregen dat Facebook enorm veel data verzameld. Die informatie heb ik ook zelf opgevraagd als onderdeel van mijn onderzoek maar dat verzoek is helaas niet ingewilligd.

Olsthoorn wijst op de nieuwe Europese privacy wetgeving die volgens hem Facebook en Google flink aan banden legt: Je moet nu eerst toestemming vragen voordat je data mag verzamelen. Dat wordt een enorme clash en Facebook probeert nu al die wetgeving tegen te houden met ongegrond onderzoek dat uitwijst dat ze 32 miljard euro per jaar bijdragen aan de Europese economie. Hiermee willen zij zeggen: kijk eens hoe belangrijk wij zijn, je moet ons niet teveel in de weg zitten. Dat is natuurlijk onderdeel van het lobby circuit. De vraag blijft of de Europese norm over de hele wereld wordt overgenomen wat betreft deze privacywetgeving.



Hoewel sommigen geloven dat Facebook in zijn structuur zo dwingend en perkend is dat mensen daar op een gegeven moment zelf genoeg van kunnen krijgen, ziet Olsthoorn dit niet in nabije toekomst gebeuren:

Ik zie dat Facebook gewoon erg slim is in het bedenken van dingen die mensen prettig vinden. Facebook maakt code die aantrekkelijk is voor ons om handelingen te verrichten en het format dwingt een bepaald gebruik af. Aan de andere kant is Unilever ook een marketingconcern en heb je bijvoorbeeld Robijn voor zwarte kleding, verzin het maar eens! Dan wordt dat ineens heel goed verkocht en dat is de verleiding; een kenmerk van de kapitalistische maatschappij waarin we leven.

Is Facebook dus eigenlijk een wolf verkleed in schaapskleren aangezien zij commerciële doeleinden verkleeden als democratische idealen zoals transparantie?

Delen is de norm en transparantie is enorm en als je daarin geloofd, en dat geloven ze, dan doen ze het heel goed. Facebook mag natuurlijk pretenderen dat alles wat je deelt goed is. Daar is ook niks mis mee en daarom ben ik ook een groot voorstander van vrije meningsuiting. Daarnaast mag Facebook contacten bijvoorbeeld 'friends' noemen terwijl het niets met vriendschap te maken heeft. In tegendeel, het staat diametraal op vriendschap, maar nog steeds vind ik het hartstikke goed wat ze doen. Zo'n beursgang is heel veel geld waard en het wordt geëxploiteerd. Ze verdienen nu ongeveer 4 euro per gebruiker per jaar aan reclame en het is nog zeker 10 keer zoveel waard op de beurs. Dat betekent eigenlijk dat elk profiel wordt verhandeld voor 40,-/ 80,- euro, dus dat zijn wij waard. Maar dat is een klant voor Albert Heijn ook waard.

Het gaat op social media om sociale interactie die wordt geëxploiteerd en het feit dat deze comodificatie volgens velen invloed heeft op ons sociaal gedrag en onze privacy. Mag je daar op deze manier profijt van maken?

Ik heb daar niet zoveel moeite mee maar ik schrijf dit boek natuurlijk ook ter bewustwording. Willen mensen dat wel weten? Willen ze weten hoeveel ze waard zijn voor Facebook. Dan nog, kijk bijvoorbeeld naar hoeveel mensen er nog roken in Nederland.

Facebook lijkt handig te zijn om contacten te onderhouden die zwakker van aard zijn, klopt dat?

Natuurlijk is het ook handig om te netwerken, maar het is vooral aapjes kijken.

In het boek wordt ook aandacht geweid aan de verslavende werking van Facebook, kunt u daar alvast iets meer over vertellen?

Deze verslavende werking is nergens groter dan op Facebook natuurlijk. Dat komt door het visuele aspect waar Facebook de aandacht op legt: de foto's. Er worden veel leuke dingen op Facebook gezet die quasi interessant zijn en dat hoort bij het moderne leven, honderden indrukken per dag. Daarnaast is natuurlijk de manier waarop ze vragen: waar denk je aan (Engels) of wat ben je aan het doen (Nederlands), wat ook onderdeel is van het verleidingsmechaniek.

Facebook is een prachtig fenomeen, het is heel goed opgezet. Ten eerst omdat het goed verleid en ten twee is het knap geprogrammeerd en er wordt voortdurend met een groep mensen nagedacht: wat is er aan de hand en hoe spelen we hier op in. Bovendien kunnen ze analyseren.

Terugkomend op het begrip privacy, wat verstaat u eigenlijk onder het begrip privacy en specifiek privacy op Facebook ?

Privacy is simpel gezegd: geheimhouding. Dat houdt in dat je geheim kunt houden wat je geheim wilt houden en het recht om vervolgens met rust gelaten te worden. Mensen kennen maar één soort privacy: ten opzichte van hun medemens. En de ongekende privacy is ten opzichte van Facebook. Facebook vult een databank en weet verschrikkelijk veel en daar hebben mensen echt geen benul van. Mensen krijgen gericht reclame en de meesten vinden dat wel aardig. Dat is het uitgangspunt binnen onze maatschappij waarbij er minder verspilling zal zijn omdat er minder reclame terecht komt bij mensen die er toch niet naar kijken of niet in geïnteresseerd zijn. Persoonlijk vind ik deze gerichte reclame wel hinderlijk omdat het de aandacht trekt maar dat heeft niet specifiek met Facebook te maken.

Facebook heeft nog ontzettend veel meer mogelijkheden op het gebied van marketing. Commercieel gezien is het een walhala. Het is grandioos wat er mogelijk is met Facebook maar hoe langer ze daarmee kunnen wachten, des te beter is het. Facebook is heel goed in het vertrouwen opbouwen van hun gebruikers. Ze zijn gericht op groei bijvoorbeeld door middel van de vriendsuggesties. Het is een heel vreemd concept natuurlijk. De mensen waarmee je op Facebook verbonden bent dat zijn je vrienden niet, dat zijn je kennissen. In mijn boek ga ik ook in op de terminologie waarbij het vaak draait om slecht of lui vertaald Engels. Maar hoeveel tijd wil je besteden aan je kennissen en hoe belangrijk is het om van je kennissen alles te weten? In mijn ogen helemaal niet.

In hoeverre maakt Facebook inbreuk op de privacy van hun gebruikers?

Aan de ene kant absoluut niet. Wij schenden zelf onze privacy. Aan de andere kant is de privacy kwestie moeilijk en iets wat je persoonlijk moet afwegen. Je kan van privacy heel makkelijk zeggen: het kan me geen worst schelen! Daarnaast kan je je afvragen wat de privacy van een paar personen dan nog waard is en hoe weeg je dat af? Veel schrijvers en boeken over privacy slagen er niet in om nou echt aan te geven hoe privacyschending is of zou kunnen zijn. Ze komen vaak tot één man wiens leven is verwoest door een foutje in de databank van de overheden waardoor hij geen werk en geen uikering krijgt etc. Dat is één fout en dat is 1 op de 16 miljoen, dat valt wel mee. In het verkeer gaan momenteel ieder jaar 700 mensen dood en dat vinden we normaal en noemen we collateral damage.

En ander voorbeeld is straling, chemische stoffen in je voedsel. Overal is veel te veel straling en dat vinden we ook allemaal normaal. Dat is de prijs die we betalen. Dat soort dingen weeg je dus voor jezelf af, maar je moet wel de kans krijgen. Het is in feite veel meer een zaak van de overheid: hoe lang wil je welk deel van de bevolking blijven beschermen?

U geeft aan dat een klein percentage uiteindelijk de dupe is van privacyschending op dit niveau. Is hieruit ook de onverschillige houding omtrent privacy vanaf te leiden?

Het kan natuurlijk vreselijk verkeerd aflopen. Kijk maar naar films zoals Minority Report of The Bourne Identity. Dat zijn geweldige films over de horrorscenario's die kunnen optreden. Maar goed, je kan deze kwestie ook relativeren door te zeggen: we leven in een luxe samenleving en dat zijn nu eenmaal de gevolgen daarvan. In Afrika

gaan miljoenen mensen dood aan de honger, dat is altijd nog wel even erger dan hier de privacykwestie.

Dragen wij als enige verantwoordelijkheid voor de bescherming van onze privacy?

Nee, ik vind dat je domme mensen moet beschermen met wetgeving. Net als dat we wetten hebben over de hoeveelheid reclame die je maximaal per uur op televisie mag laten zien. Zo wordt er nu dus die privacywet geïntroduceerd waarbij men eerst toestemming moet vragen om gegevens op te slaan. Ik denk dat deze wetgeving wel goed is. Daarnaast komt er ook wetgeving over het feit dat Facebook data moet weghalen als je dat verzoekt.

Google is een goed voorbeeld als het gaat om privacy. Google is namelijk in bezit van jouw zoekdata en je zoekt naar dingen waarvan je absoluut niet wilt dat anderen dat weten, zoals bijvoorbeeld kwalen die je hebt. Tot nu toe zei Google die zoekopdrachten alleen te gebruiken om de zoekdienst zelf te verbeteren waarbij je persoonlijke zoekresultaten krijgt en dus ook een webhistorie. Dit proces was niet afgesteld op naam en dat was dus goed geregeld. Nu heeft Google besloten in verband met Google Plus, de tegenhanger van Facebook, dat vanaf 1 maart 2012 je naam wordt geregistreerd en je zoekresultaten hieraan worden gekoppeld. Maar dat weet bijna niemand. Zo'n webgeschiedenis is hartstikke interessant om te bekijken omdat je dan een beeld krijgt van welke informatie je aan derde partijen weggeeft. Zo kun je ook alles wat je ooit op Facebook hebt gezet downloaden. Nu is dat niet meer zo spannend want iedereen heeft nu een Timeline gekregen en daar staat natuurlijk alles al in.

In het boek wordt Facebook dus niet als 'het kwaad' afgeschilderd?

Het probleem met kennisgaring is vaak dat mensen snel een mening hebben. Dat is niet mijn stijl. Ik leg bloot wat er aan de hand is en laat de lezer zelf op basis van deze feiten hun oordeel en conclusie vormen. In tegenstelling tot Facebook waarbij mensen vaak al snel hun oordeel klaar hebben liggen, staan social networking sites (SNS) als concept niet ter discussie. Waarom is dit zo belangrijk? Hebben wij dat nodig? Ik ben zelf heel sociaalconservatief met dat soort dingen, hoewel ik wel blij met het Internet omdat het veel dingen makkelijk maakt. Als ik foto's wil sturen, doe ik dit per e-mail, daar komt geen SNS aan te pas.

Is er sprake van een generatiekloof als het aankomt op deze specifieke behoefte?

Nee ik denk dat dat wel meevalt. Technologie is wel vanzelfsprekender, technologie dwingt je. Dat is het elementaire gebrek: technologie is heel snel tot ons gekomen en we beseffen niet wat technologie met ons doet. Een grappig voorbeeld hiervan zijn het aantal ongelukken met elektrische fietsen in de bocht. Mensen beseffen niet dat je in de bocht moet afremmen, met een fiets doe je dat automatisch omdat je een paar meter voor de bocht stopt met trappen. Op een elektrische fiets werkt dit anders en dat is een fantastisch voorbeeld van een nieuwe technologie waarmee we nog niet kunnen omgaan.

We staan er niet bij stil dat we iedere keer informatie geven aan een machine en dat is natuurlijk verdomd handig. Maar bijna alle technologiegebruik heeft ook een

keerzijde. Ik ben er niet op tegen maar laten we daar eens een keer over nadenken: wat gebeurt er nou met technologie? En dan wordt je natuurlijk al snel voor een ludist uitgemaakt (diep in mijn hart ben ik dat natuurlijk wel).

Peter Olsthoorn's boek De Macht van Facebook is verkrijgbaar in twee edities:

De macht van Facebook. Theo, ben je dood ofzo? (Paperback 245 pagina's)

De macht van Facebook. Onweerstaanbaar! (Hardcover 470 pagina's)

26 april: debat over de macht van Facebook – vriendschap naar de beurs

Posted: April 3, 2012 at 8:06 am

U bent uitgenodigd om donderdag 26 april 2012 het debat bij te wonen over 'De Macht van Facebook – Vriendschap naar de Beurs' in de Waag Society in Amsterdam. Het sociale netwerk Facebook is het snelst groeiende virtuele netwerk wereldwijd. Met de beursgang van Facebook en de publicatie van het boek 'De macht van Facebook' van Peter Olsthoorn wordt het tijd dit sociale netwerk eens onder de loep te nemen. Daarom organiseren Peter Olsthoorn, het Instituut voor Netwerk Cultuur en Waag Society op 26 april het debat 'De macht van Facebook – Vriendschap naar de beurs'. Facebook kent belangrijke positieve kanten: het is een perfect platform voor sociaal verkeer, marketing, identificatie en het is veiliger dan het open internet. Hoe kunnen we hier het best gebruik van maken als internetgemeenschap? Zijn er ook nadelen aan verbonden en zijn die overkomelijk? Deze en vele andere vragen komen aan bod tijdens het debat.

Sprekers zijn onder andere:- Frank Kresin (research director Waag Society)- Peter Olsthoorn (auteur 'De Macht van Facebook')- Steven Jongeneel (directeur Social Embassy)- Antoinette Hoes (Head of Strategy Tribal DDB)- Karin Spaink (Columniste voor Het Parool en internetfilosoof)

Waar? Waag Society Nieuwmarkt 4, Amsterdam

Wanneer? Donderdag 26 april 2012 Van 16.30 tot 18.30 uur Na afloop van het debat is er een borrel en kan het boek gekocht worden.

Aanmelden: Aanmelden kan via een e-mail naar rsvp@networkcultures.org

Kijk voor meer informatie ook op events.waag.org

3. Begroting versus werkelijke gemaakte kosten

Onderstaand zijn de begrote kosten versus de werkelijk gemaakte kosten weergegeven.

Unlike Us event & research February 2012

COSTS

1	STAFF & THIRD PARTIES			begrote kosten	werkelijke kosten
1,1	Project manager	8	600	4800	4800
1,2	Producer	6	450	2700	2700
1,3	Researcher	6	450	2700	
	Kosten Caroline Nevejan				200
1,4	Documentationteam	1	350	350	
1,5	Bloggers	6	75	450	
					225
1,6	Volunteers	2	150	300	
	Silvio Lorusso				250
					196
1,7	Financial administration controller	4	70	280	
1,8	Financial administration senior administrator	3	80	240	
	TOTAL STAFF & THIRD PARTIES			11820	8371

2	TRAVEL & REPRESENTATION			Costs	Costs
2,1	Accommodation (incl. city taxes & breakfast)			6081	
					6660
2,2	Travelling	1	5.000	5000	
	David M. Berry (NO)				249
	Philipp Budka (AT)				258
	Thomas Cheneseau (FR)				288
	Jodi Dean (USA)				647
	Carolin Gertiz (UK)				136
	Walter Langelaar (NL)				100
	Ganaele Langlois (CA)				804
	Carlo v. Loesch				231
	Alessandro Ludovico (IT)				342
	Caroline Nevejan (NL)				350
	Arnold Roosendaal (NL)				100
	Eleanor Saitta (USA)				610
	Max Schrems (DE)				148
	Elijah Sparrow (USA)				775
	Spideralex (ES)				247
	James Vasile (USA)				729
	Dylan Wittkower (USA)				679
	Oliver Leistert (HU)				259

	Olia Lialina				138
	Dmytri Kleiner				70
	Caroline Nevejan				150
	Tobias Leingruber				90
2,3	Network / speakers diner	1	2.000	2000	2043
TOTAL TRAVEL & REPRESENTATION				13081	16103
3	LOCATION			Costs	Costs
3,1	Location: TrouwAmsterdam (incl technique building up/down)	1	8.750	8750	10366
3,2	Documentation / registration of the conference	1	2.200		2380
TOTAL LOCATION				8750	12746
4	PUBLICITY			Costs	Costs
4,1	Design publicitymaterial	1	2.200	2200	
	Silvio Lorusso, factuur 1 van 2				1000
					1200
4,2	Program booklet	1	2.200	2200	
					2517
4,3	Flyer and Poster	1	500	500	
	Poster PostFly				173
	Flyer PostFly				115
4,4	Photo / video reportage	1	250	250	
					476
4,5	Website	1	500	500	
4,6	Stamp	1	50	50	
4,7	Essink Distribution posters	1	300	300	
	Essink distributie				300
4,8	Badgets	1	100	100	
	Multicopy				264
4,9	Divers	1	500	500	
	Presentje Moderatoren	1			92
	Rachel Somers Miles	1	300		300
TOTAL PUBLICITY				6600	6437
5	OFFICE COSTS			Costs	Costs
5,1	Porto			PM INC	
5,2	Phone and fax			PM INC	
TOTAL OFFICE COSTS				0	
6	CATERING			Costs	Costs
6,1	Lunch (2 days, 150 persons a day)	300	12,50	3750	
6,2	Coffee and tea (2 days, 150 persons a day)	300	9	2700	
6,3	Muntjes TrouwAmsterdam	220	3		605
TOTAL CATERING				6450	605
				46701	44263

**TOTAL
COSTS**

1	INCOME			begrote kosten	werkelijke kosten
1,1	Registration fee	75	35	2625	2518
1,2	Mondriaan Foundation			17500	17500
1,3	Contribution Stichting Democracy and Media			7500	7500
1,4	Institute of Network Cultures			19076	16745
	TOTAL INCOME			46701	44263



Unlike Us Amsterdam #2

UNDERSTANDING
SOCIAL MEDIA MONOPOLIES
AND THEIR ALTERNATIVES

TrouwAmsterdam,
Wibautstraat 127,
1091 GL Amsterdam

March 8-10, 2012

